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I speak out of the deep of night, out of the deep of darkness, and out of the deep of night I speak.

If you come to my house friend, bring me a lamp and a window I can look through at the crowd in the happy alley.

Forough Farrokhzad

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Why Stories Matter

> Pay attention to every corner of the world, we are at the eve of a revolution. Be assured, this revolution is not going to be bloody and savage like a man's revolution.
>
> Fatma Nesibe, feminist lecturer, in Istanbul 1911

Feminism, as a social movement, is one of the significant dynamics of the Turkish socio-cultural matrix. It is also a research area that, for the past thirty years, has provided fundamental gateways into the analysis and criticism of power structures. Parallel to Turkish feminist activism there is another dynamic of great significance; literary texts (i.e. fiction) written by prolific Turkish feminist figures such as Halide Edip Adıvar (*The Shirt of Flame*, 1924), Fatma Aliye (*Groaning*, 1910), and Suat Derviş (*The Black Book*, 1921). Through their novelistic work, they have played a pioneering role in illustrating and epitomizing the portrayal of "the" emancipated and modernized Turkish woman. Through these novels one can trace the emergence and the supremacy of the Turkish feminist paradigm. One piece of evidence that has, however, been subject to debate and rebuttal has been pinpointed by contemporary prominent Turkish feminists such as Necla Arat. She has argued, that "it was after the proclamation of the Republic that women were introduced to notions like emancipation and female suffrage" (1996).

In connection with Arat's discourse Nevval Sevindi emerged, a Turkish self-proclaimed feminist anthropologist and director of The Women's Artifacts Library (*Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi*), which is a memory bank on women in Istanbul. In an interview with the *Hürriyet Daily News* on September 4 2011, she argued that the understanding of Ottoman women has been expressed in the manner of "four wives living with her chador behind window screens". She thereby unearthed an unobserved reality about Ottoman women:

> The word 'feminist' is used by the Ottoman women for the first time. They used the word in women's newspapers and magazines and called themselves 'feminist.' For instance, the publishers, editors and layout designers of these magazines were women. They made very

> important studies on gender equality in education. Plenty of women's newspapers and magazines were published during the Ottoman period. Founder and leader of the first women's party in the world was Nezihe Muhiddin, an Ottoman woman. (Ibid.)

Nonetheless, and in conjunction with these views, Turkish literature - namely novels - has emerged as a prominent form of agency for feminism cognizance. For instance, Sibel Irzik has revealed how the Turkish novel has often "exhibited a preoccupation with social and historical themes" (2003: 554). She has further described how "the Turkish novel has seen itself as a means of social critique and mobilization ever since its beginnings during the last decades of the nineteenth century" (Ibid.).

It is, however, important for one to bear in mind that this affiliation between a Turkish feminist framework and female novelists represents an elitist and a particularly modernist top-down manifestation of definite female role models. This is because, historically, the Turkish feminist framework has gone hand in hand with Turkish modernization and secularization. To give but just a few examples, I will refer here to the Turkish novel *The Shirt of Flame* (1924) by the feminist writer Halide Edip Adivar, which Göknar has described as "manifestations of an emerging Turkish secular master-plot" (2013: 35). Also, in her article "Reading Turkish Modernization through Novels from the Reform to the Republic" (2010) Betül Coşkun has shown how these early novels infused with powerful feminist allusions have constantly depicted the ideal Westernized and modern female prototype as the normative one in a emancipated social order. Coşkun proceeds to highlight the array of counter-images manifested in these novels; between the traditional female, described as the lower-class dancer, and the *alafranga* (the foreign or Western woman) portrayed as the educated aristocrat and the role model which the modern Turkish woman should follow.

For years, this 'iconizing' and depictive *modus operandi* characteristic of Turkish feminist novelists remained persistently visible in the works of the March Twelfth Novelists[1] of the 1970s. Dubbed by Ahmet Alver, professor of Turkish Studies, as "intellectual revolutionary women" (2012: 775), these feminist protagonists ranked largely among the left-wing movement of that time. Alver argues that "the revolutionary

[1] The 'March Twelfth Novels' is a retroactive notion employed to describe the work of fiction written through the period of the March Twelfth military intervention Most famous March Twelfth female novelists are Füruzan (Those Born in '47, 1975), Adalet Ağaoğlu (Lying Down to Die, 1973), Sevgi Sosyal (Tante Rosa, 1968) and Pınar Kür (Tomorrow, Tomorrow, 1976).

women" were not only on a par with bourgeois women, but also on a divide with rural ones. In his opinion, this dualistic distinction highlights "the divide between the illiterate, backward and conservative nature of rural women, and their progressive urban counterparts" (2012: 779). Criticizing March Twelfth authors, Alver has found their portrayal of the modern woman proper rather problematic since he regards it as deriving from the "Kemalist[2] definition of women as markers of modernity" (Ibid.). According to him, this feminist-novelist movement promotes a continuity with a quondam vision of the rural woman model as the ignorant and subjugated "animalistic reproductive" other, controlled by the patriarchy (Ibid.). He further concludes:

> On the one hand, this seems to justify them (sic) revolutionary intellectual female movement: these women need educating to save them from abuse. However, such a patronising view is undoubtedly what alienated rural peasants from the intellectual leftist movement, which ultimately caused the downfall of the left. (Ibid.)

Evidently, the novelistic works of these Turkish female authors writing with feminist tendencies have very often embodied a didactic narrative that strongly implies the already existing hegemonic atmosphere within the prominent Turkish feminist framework.

It is inarguable, however, that the intertwinement between Turkish feminism and the novel genre - proclaiming the identity of the modern woman- has contributed to the re-invention of dichotomies based on female identity. However, it is expected that literature as a tool should grant us interpretative frames that extend beyond daily political language. The transformative power of literature is exemplified by the crucial interplay between Chicana literature and Chicana feminism. For instance, Chicana feminist Gloria E. Anzaldua's semi-autobiographical work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) uses literary techniques that reflect her identity politics through what she calls the *Mestiza consciousness*. At first sight it might seem irrelevant to compare the Turkish feminist literature framework with the Chicana feminist context and the *Mestiza consciousness*. However, there seems to be a similar interplay between the work of contemporary Turkish female novelists and the social, cultural and political power structures in Turkey.

[2] Kemalism is the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey derived from the name of the founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

It is this entanglement between art and politics that is the central focus of this dissertation. Through the research I aim to elaborate on the intersection between fictional representations (story telling) and the socio-political/ cultural/ ideological trajectories. While I tackle literary and political intersections, I treat novels by specific Turkish female novelists as alternative spaces of identity formations. I argue that these novelists come forward with a literary positioning like that of Anzaldua's *Mestiza.* One may ask, however: how does Anzaldua sketch the *Mestiza*? And how does the latter analogize with the leitmotiefs of these Turkish novelists?

> She can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence. I'm not sure exactly how the work takes place underground—subconsciously. It is work that the soul performs. That focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the mestiza stands, is where the phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness —a mestiza consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspects of each new paradigm. (1987:102)

It is likely that this kind of *Mestiza* positioning has been devised by the (Turkish) novelists through the sum of their narratives, the female characters, and the historically crucial socio-political phenomena they touch upon in detail. Thereby specific works of fiction by two Turkish female novelists, Elif Shafak and Emine Sevgi Özdamar, form the focal point of this research. Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Özdamar's *Life is a Caravanserai* (1992) and *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (1998) are notable novels that contribute to transnational and trans-cultural aesthetics, generating a fictional response to the Turkish feminist identity crisis. Like Gloria Anzaldua's *Mestiza*, Shafak and Özdamar engage "in exploring the private at the center of their politics" (Adak 2007: 29). Through Shafak and Özdamar's novels, I will attempt to trace the marginalized and silenced women of the Turkish and Armenian diaspora, the working class, minorities as well as the religious mystics. I also scrutinize the traditional Western -based epistemology that undervalues spirituality, tradition, the un-modern, and mysticism. In this sense, I clarify this positioning by addressing in-depth how authors become border-dwellers whose literary representations depict the consciously hidden struggle between dichotomies and thickened borders regarding the Turkish feminist approach.

But why do stories matter? In her work, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011) Clare Hemmings indicates that stories matter as they "intersect with wider institutionalizations of gendered meanings" (2011: 1). To Hemmings, telling stories about gender and feminism can also lead to an interruption in the narratives that make up dominant Western feminist stories (2). Nevertheless, I strongly believe that this sort of storytelling faces crucial shortcomings, not in the least because the "jugular" of fiction needs to be aesthetically designed rather than imbued with deep political consciousness. Furthermore, this attempt can unwittingly contribute to a position where the reinvention of power structures is inevitable. On a different note, in her speech on TED (Technology, Entertainment Design), the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie introduced the word *nkali*, which is from the Igbo language and loosely corresponds to the hierarchy of greatness and power structures of the world (2009). To Adichie, the principles of *nkali* do not merely characterize our economic and political world; but they also define stories to be told and written. In other words, "power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (Adichie 2009). It is this entanglement of stories with power that makes them either slippery, hence 'deadly', or a fulcrum that may lead to liberation.

In this sense, the intertwinement between the Turkish feminist paradigm and fiction (novels) plays a dual role. On the one hand, it demonstrates the relation between power and freedom. On the other, it sets the forms for knowing and representing real life. These two vital dynamics and their intersection are the after-effect of the Republican Turkey constitution in 1923. In essence, Turkish women's rights "were not obtained through the activities of women's movements, as in the case of Western women's struggle for suffrage, but were granted by an enlightened governing elite committed to the goals of modernization and 'Westernization'" (Kandiyoti 1987: 320). Thus, this catching up with a "belated" modernity was basically characterized by a state-sponsored feminist activism that ran parallel to the language revolution, which in turn had changed the Arabic script into the currently employed Latin alphabet. The modernization project in Turkey entailed a massive dismantling of the old culture and the enunciation of a brand new one, structured on new ideals and, specifically, the emancipation of women.

However, these reforms featured firsthand visions of Turkey's first president, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and his small group of comrades whose values and interests

derived from an urban, middle-class background of Republican Turkey. Nonetheless, it is plausible to add that the top-down - and excessively romanticized - purportedly egalitarian modernization project regarding Turkish women endorsed a false impression about Turkish "emancipation" and "liberation". The state feminist discourse (i.e. Kemalist feminism) depicted by Jenny B. White had practically re-invented another paradigm of power and domination:

> The Republican state determined the characteristics of the ideal woman and set up a monopolistic system to propagate this ideal in a population that held often quite different values and perceptions of ideal women's behaviour. While these reforms created a generation of powerful emancipated women, they did so at a cost. Since the new Republican woman represented the modern, secular, Westernized state, she was expected to behave and dress in what the state defined as a modern, Western manner. (White 2003: 146)

I would like to add that the rhetoric of enlightenment, progressivism and modernity were all notions of the vocabulary of a myth that had re-invented patriarchy and hegemonic power structures in Turkey.

The link between Turkish feminist theory and literature, and fiction in particular, had progressed and strengthened in the early Republican years. It is worth exploring this process here, even though briefly. While inducing the so-labelled "belated" modernity to its "full-growth", Turkish politicians together with the contribution of the military engendered a consensual hegemony. For, at this stage of their modernizing project, an interesting dimension emerged, where both literature and literary figures became the essential apparatus for extensive linguistic and socio-cultural transformations. Hence, under these massive structural reforms and the overnight birth of utterly new ideographs, novels paved the way to subtly infuse the image of the normative "ideal woman" into the political and socio-cultural unconscious of the Turkish society. Furthermore, the Turkification of the language- replacing Arabic-Persian scripts with Latin ones- helped to endorse the nationalist, elitist (top-down) and discriminatory feminist discourse, since a substantial percentage of Turkish women had not yet conformed to the linguistic amendments. In this context, Gregory Jusdanus, in *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (1991) tackles how both literature and literary figures have influenced history in countries like Greece and Turkey. He carries on describing how literature and the novel genre in particular casted privileged cultural spaces, and consequently ascribed compensatory functions (Jusdanus 1991: 78).

In this context, Elif Shafak in an interview with Michael Skafidas, former editor of Greek NPQ, revealed that *l'art pour l'art* has almost no meaning in contemporary Turkey, since "politics and literature are inextricably linked" (2007: 29). There is a political consensus to writing in Turkey that involves fiction writers alongside, since they are perceived as social engineers and are hence charged with responsibilities. "Novelists are thought to be doing something very cerebral, like intellectual engineering. So the message becomes important but not the style" (Shafak 2005: 19). To brace my argument, I refer to the case of Shafak and her fellow novelist Orhan Pamuk, who were accused of insulting "Turkishness". As a consequence to their act, both authors were charged under Article 301 -an article of the Turkish Penal Code making it illegal to insult Turkey, the founder of the republic: Atatürk, the Turkish nation, or its governmental institutions.

In 2005 Pamuk was prosecuted and faced up to three years in prison for stating in an interview with a Swiss magazine. In the interview, Pamuk referred to the Armenian genocide committed by the Ottoman administration during World War I, and to Turkey's most recent clashes with Kurds. I quote: "One million Armenians and 30,000 Kurds were killed in these lands and nobody but me dares talk about it" (*The New York Times* 2005). Shafak[3], from her part, claims that "in Turkey, a novel is a public statement" (*Qantara* 2008). Pamuk audaciously questions the self-propagated socio-economic, ethnicist and sexist power structures enacted by the emerging modern and secular Turkish nation-state. To Pamuk such politics of reformation have resulted in societal divisions. On different note, Alver, and in reference to Pamuk, argues that such a dichotomous logic is generally visible amongst Turkish Westernizers who aim at creating "a country that is richer, happier, and more powerful […] but as part of westward-looking movements, they remain deeply critical of certain basic characteristics of their country and culture. […] and see their culture as defective, sometimes even worthless" (Alver 2013: 471). One of Pamuk's notable novels *Snow* (2002), is a dual critique of both the Westernizing, secularizing and modernizing Kemalist reforms of the Republic and also a condemnation of politicised Islam (Alver 2013: 470).

[3] Shafak was prosecuted due to a fictional character's commenting on the Armenian genocide in her fictive novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006).

It is inarguable then that fiction became one of the fundamental tools for preaching modernization and westernization to Turkish women. And that feminist-activist authors were the first preachers to advocate such norms (Göknar 2013, Coşkun 2010). Novels written by feminist authors portrayed the normative, ideal woman through their characters. As I have stated earlier Halide Edip Adıvar (*The Shirt of Flame*, 1924) and Fatma Aliye (*Groaning*, 1910) are prominent feminist authors whose works have inspired many contemporary feminist writers like Ayşe Kulin (*Return* 2013, *Farewell* 2009, *Aylin* 2007). In Chapter three I elaborate on Kulin's controversial and deeply discriminatory feminist authorship and uncover the backlash against Turkish feminist novelists and their feminist framework. I highlight the paradox embedded in their emancipatory movement; how their novelistic effort was loaded with hegemony and discrimination. In other words, in their effort to enunciate and legitimize the golden rules for "emancipated women", traditional women were portrayed as the counter-image, the non-normative model, as opposed to the westernized and modernized woman embodying the role-model image (Coşkun 2010: 938). However, these novels are not fully representative of the manifold and complex geographies and spaces enacted in the Turkish society, nor do they pertain to the diverse groups of women therein. For instance, in these narratives Kurds and Armenians of Eastern Turkey are invisible, orientalized entities. All these novels mirror the Turkish feminist theories' (e.g. neo-Kemalist feminism and liberal bourgeois feminism) hidden attitude towards women that never goes beyond an elite, urban, nationalist, discriminatory and hierarchical sphere.

Furthermore, the Turkish feminist framework emerges from the ruins of an imperial background. It fosters complicated genealogy, methodology and epistemology, that are foreign to western scholarly, and not applicable to Third World and Middle Eastern feminist understanding. Thus, Turkish feminism is located at a cross-point between a multi-national, multi-belief imperial history (Ottoman Empire) and a nationalist, laicist republican Turkish history. In this endeavor, I therefore offer a two-fold introductory chapter; one that I have so far introduced and in which I explore the link between feminist theory and literature. And a second part (I develop here below) in which I proffer a brief history of the socio-political milieu from which the "woman question" emerged and strengthened. In this section I bring underlying facts to the fore, and discuss

how Turkish feminism, the Republican modernization /secularization project and literature built up a collaborative path.

1.2. Mapping the Scope and Methodology

The "woman question" and the women revolution have a long history in Turkey, which was timed to coincide with the feminist movement in the West. The standard story of the phenomenon starts with the advent of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and with the modernization and westernization project of its founding fathers. A secular nation-state was built under Kemalism, which had set the ideological basis of this revolution led by Kemal Atatürk. Along with this project, the concept of "women suffrage" was introduced to Turkish women in 1934, even earlier than certain Western countries such as France and Belgium.

Prior to voting right, a major legislation was introduced - the 1926 Civic Code- to abolish the Ottoman code and replace it with Western life practices (Diner and Toktas 2010: 41). These radical alterations impacted women's everyday lives in different ways; for instance, polygamy was banned and women were given property rights; contrariwise, a ban on the veil was introduced, a bylaw that the 'daughters of the Republic' boasted about then. Certainly, the Kemalist ideology was a significant breakthrough in the development of women's social status and the institutionalization of women's right in Turkey. However, one has to bear in mind that the form of secularism that had been implemented by the Kemalist Republican State was often considered as a "top-down" ideology, "foreign in its roots" -inspired by French secularity, "laïcité"- and protected by military power (Göle 2008: 35).

Yet, here I argue that the Kemalist reforms should by no means insinuate that before the Republic era Turkish women lived in total darkness. As feminist writer and activist Şirin Tekeli claims "in Turkey the history of the women's movement is quite old, since it goes back to Ottoman times. Indeed, more than a century ago, from 1870 onwards, our grandmothers started to question their subordinate status" (2006: 119). A report published in 2007 by the European Stability Initiative (ESI) - *Sex And Power In Turkey: Feminism, Islam and the Maturing of Turkish Democracy*- also reveals that in Turkey feminist movement has its start in the pre-Atatürk period (Ottoman era). Furthermore, notable Ottoman feminists such as Fatma Nesibe gave series of lectures on the "feminine

revolution", and societies like "The Advancement of Women" and "The Defense of the Rights of Women" (Akyol 2007: 1). These discourses are antithetical to the Kemalist feminists myth which dismisses a "Turkish feminist genealogy" traced from the Ottoman time (See e.g. Aynur Demirdirek in "In pursuit of the Ottoman Women's Movement" 2011). It is perhaps reasonable, yet ironic, to add that it was Atatürk himself who shut down pre-existing feminist organizations, justified as a way of protecting the republic from the dangers of civil society (Akyol 2007: 1).

In a counter argument, Necla Arat- a coeval social science professor and a leading neo-Kemalist feminist- ennobles Kemalist feminism for conceiving and devising the "women of enlightenment" movement (See e.g. "Women's Studies in Turkey" 1996). She further accuses the West for supporting and advocating a moderate Islam to Kemalism (See also Knaus 2007: 11). Arat, like other neo-Kemalist feminists, views Islam as a threat to the status of equity which Atatürk had promoted (Turam 2007: 113). In fact, current Turkish feminists defending the Kemalist ideology, draw a bold line between the Ottoman - patriarchal, religious and traditional - society and the egalitarian and modernized Turkish Republic. But while Arat and her fellows dismiss the feminist activism from the pre-Republican era, Alexander Safarian, professor of Turkish Studies, deems the struggle for a reformative feminist-activism, in terms of education and social status, a pure "wishful thinking" (2007: 143). To him, such activism doesn't question the social status of Turkish women, since the progressive minds of the Turkish society are constantly infused by "the medieval Islamic yoke" (Ibid.). Obviously, Safarian's radicalism coincides with the Kemalist feminist discourse which derives from a universalized Eurocentric ideology of modernity blended with evolutionary muse.

I would like to borrow Safarian's "medieval Islamic yoke" to first look into his locution, and respectively deconstruct the term modernity/modernization. To begin, the word "medieval" designates an "epistemological scale which orders historical processes from traditional to the modern, from barbarism to civilization, from community to the individual, from the orient to the occident" (Tlostanova 2015: 41). My contention is that, such a perception, based on the rhetoric of modernity, avers to be problematic. For, it holds a position against the traditional (in this case the Ottoman society), the patriarchal, the oriental, and the mystic-other darker Islam without suggesting tangible solutions to the prevailing minatory power structures menacing to the social status of Ottoman women

at the time. Oftentimes the traditional is associated with patriarchy. Such an association, however, spotlights modernization and places the rhetoric of modernity as the ultimate goal to reach, mostly because both patriarchy and the traditional are components of a Western myth generated by the colonial discourse and its modernization enterprise (Tlostanova 2010, Oyěwùmi 1997, Marcos 2005, Lugones 2007).

Here I contend that adopting the rhetoric of modernity without being critical of it, explicitly or implicitly, brings out pitfalls; it endorses dichotomies by highlighting and undermining differences, thus advocating homogenization. Needless to say that the modernity in question refers here to "Western modernity", whose foundation is rooted in the Renaissance period and the discovery of America, followed by the Enlightenment movement and the French revolution, which in turn bolstered Western modernity and civilization. A sharp-witted chronology of modernity is drawn by Argentinean philosopher, Enrique Dussel, who states: "For intellectuals from Northern Europe and the United States, from J. Habermas to Toulmin, Modernity more or less follows this geopolitical path: Renaissance (East)→Protestant Reform (North)→French Revolution (West)→English Parlimentarianism" (2006: 13).

Jürgen Habermas, in his turn, affirms that restricting modernity to Renaissance constricts history (1981: 3). He states that "people considered themselves modern during the period of Charles the Great, in the 12th century, as well as in France of the late 17th century, at the time of the famous "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes"" (Ibid.). What Habermas accounts for is that the word "modern" birthed and re-birthed at the break of every new epoch in Europe, it appeared and reappeared at the juncture of every renewed relationship with the ancient; whenever, antiquity became a model to be restored and recovered through some form of imitation (Ibid.). While this is Habermas' account, Stephen Toulmin's thesis indeed endorses Dussel's argument. To Toulmin the initial signs of modernity evidently came to the fore through Renaissance (1990: 23).

Nevertheless, the chronology of modernity doesn't make the focal point in my argument here. What I seek to examine are the shortcomings of modernity with regard to Eurocentricism, the colonial matrix of power and chronopolitics that results in Western modernity and the abstract universalism of its apparatuses. On this matter, I turn to Mignolo:

> 'Conceptually, the notion of chrono-politics adds another dimension to our understanding of the colonization of time; it enriches our understanding of the way European Renaissance colonized by inventing the Middle Ages, and later, the Enlightenment invented the primitive. While there is a difference between the colonization of time during the Renaissance, the invention of the "primitive" during the Enlightenment, and the corporate politics of time under neoliberalism, all three historical managements of "time" are different instances of coloniality of time or, in Innerarity's words, chrono-politics. Chrono-politics, in other words, is a specific aspect of theo- and ego-politics of knowledge; it is a civilizational principle that serves to ostracize all who do not conform to the modern conventions of time, that devalues "subalterns" for being slow and not racing towards death, which in the rhetoric of modernity is translated as "progress" and "development". (2011: 178)

Thus, modernity is a conceptual matrix that cannot be reduced to the dynamic of progress or newness. It should be understood not as an alternative to the traditional, but as an element of a "continuing colonization of time and space" (Mignolo 2012: 10). That is, macro-narratives about historical processes impose the idea that the history of civilization and modernization is linear. And here modernity comes to the fore as a term "founded and expanded, in the internal history of Europe and the U.S. in the language of progress and newness" (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012: 10). The foundation of modernity to Mignolo…

> … consisted of affirming the point of arrival of the societies in which the men who were telling the story and conceiving modernity were residing; it provided and still provides the justification for the continuing colonization of time and space: "bringing" modernity to the world (in terms of conversion to Christianity, to civilization, to market democracy), became a "mission" that, in the name of progress and development, has justified colonization, from the conquest of Mexico to the conquest of Iraq. (2012: 10)

To be modern means to reside at the top of a hierarchical structure that codifies power relations of who represents the margins, and whose locus is the centre. Thereby, when we refer to modernity we can not ignore coloniality (37).

Hereby I would like to take on these assumptions and attempt to go for the jugular of Safarian and Arat's on their rough disavowal and dismissal of Ottoman women quest for emancipation (see above). Both authors, apparently, ignore Ottoman feminists like Fatma Aliye (*Groaning,* 1910) and Emine Semiye (*Poverty*, 1908) who wrote for the magazine "Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete" (*Ladies' Own Gazette*), and published novels with feminist perspectives through the early years of the twentieth century. For all this, I concede that Ottoman women faced oppression- legal and social restrictions like the strict dress codes - a status one can certainly be critical of. However, both Safarian and Arat somehow miss on the fact that Ottoman feminism was an elite led movement which only

reached a minority of women from upper social-class and with higher education (See e.g. Zihnioğlu 1998). I contend that both authors dealt with Ottoman feminism with epistemological considerations that drew a hard and fast line between modernity and tradition, which gave mere appearance to a hegemonic apparatus of knowledge from which we could not know either progress (emancipation) in itself, or praxis (oppression) in itself. Moreover, both arguments were embedded in a rhetoric that treated Islam as the traditional situated on a divide with modernity.

Both Safarian and Arat's epistemological grounds run perilously near the 'zero-point epistemology' (See e.g. Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012). Also, the nature of the knowledge they produce, its generalization, legitimization, transformation and transmission, manifest "the hubris of the zero-point". The zero-point epistemology is a concept first coined by Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez and has been counter-used by Mignolo to foster a decolonizing methodology (Mignolo 2009). According to Mignolo, a decolonizing epistemology is the de-linking and decolonizing of knowledge that helps to generate democratic, non-imperial societies. Whereas, a *zero-point* stance refers to a "detached and a neutral point of observation" from which the "knowing subject" parts (Mignolo 2009: 160). To put it in Mignolo's own words, "the knowing subject in the disciplines is transparent, disincorporated from the known and untouched by the geo-political configuration of the worlds in which people are racially ranked and regions are racially configured" (Ibid.). The knowing subject masters the zero point, "maps the world and its problems, classifies people and projects into what is good for them" (Ibid.).

This said, it is plausible to position Safarian and Arat's discourse on a dichotomous spectrum, where gender -women's rights- and Islam sit on opposite points of the axis. However, there is more at stake here than dichotomy. In truth, debates on feminism, gender and women rights in Islam are not only politicized, but ideologically charged, since both rhetoric are embroiled in a "recurring" history of polemics between Islamic and non-Islamic cultures- and the West (See Shaikh 2003:148). Therefore, meta-narratives on Islam vs. non-Islam are no longer tenable today. For, they generate hierarchical categories, reinvent racism and endorse colonial epistemology. Such is the case with Kemalist Turkish feminism and its reinvented paradigms, the neo-Kemalist feminism and the liberal bourgeois feminism, whose rhetoric on modernization will re-

fashion coloniality (self-colonialism) and re-produce new forms of discrimination and marginalization.

Before I go on with my analysis, and will delve more deeply into the Turkish imperial-colonial configurations that to this day have hampered progressive and effective agency within the Turkish feminist framework, I think it is necessary to touch upon several milestones in the Turkish history of nationalism that altogether contributed to the depreciation and dismissal of Ottoman women agency. As a matter of fact, the Kemalist way of questioning Ottoman society and feminism was closely related to a nationalist historiography which disregarded "all that was linked with the immediate pre-republican past, denied the agency of Ottoman women, picturing them as helpless slaves to Sultanic and religious despotism" (Lewis 2004: 5). Thus, the Kemalist modernist-strives to reform and restructure the state emanated from a highly 'patriarchal' model. As the two antithetical models, Ottoman and Republican, spiralled together in an intransigent collision, a coveted gendered revolution rippled in the socio-cultural fabric of the rising Turkish republic (See e.g. Altınay 2004). In her work *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey*, Altınay confirms that the discursive power of the Turkish gendered revolution derived indeed from nationalism, and was furthered by modern power apparatuses that integrated a militarization process (2004).

Both militarism and the Republican regime had accounted for a secularist and nationalist state-sponsored feminism, and without them the Kemalist feminist framework could gain no foothold. To this day, the Kemalist feminist discourse holds in its plies a complex interplay of colonialism and orientalism, which again denotes homogenization, intolerance and discrimination. Back in the Republican era, women were seen as potential bearers of the social reform projects; their bodies became a platform on which the foundations proper of the modernizing, nationalizing and secularizing projects were built. It is noteworthy to again remark that the Kemalist feminist paradigm succeeded as a purely elite-driven project, whose opportunities could be cherished only by a minority of women since it embedded ruthless and cynical viewpoints with regard to women rights (Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997: 3). Taking the lead in Yeşim Arat's perspective, I quote:

> While the state encouraged increasing involvement by a group of elite women in public life, it sent a different message to an increasingly large number of "other" women: they were expected to contribute to the process of modernization not by becoming elite women

> professionals but by being housewives à la the West, bringing "order," "discipline," and "rationality" to homemaking in the private realm. (1997: 100)

It is perhaps compelling to state here that Kemalist feminism and its modernization discourse rested on a legitimized hierarchy that engendered social divisions, marginalized spaces (Southeastern Turkey is a vivid example), communities, identities and knowledge (namely traditions and religious mysticism). And the mere fact that Turkey was instituted on a multi-ethno-religious, multi-cultural and a multi-lingual heritage from the Ottoman Empire was a key factor in the failure of the republic to adequately function within a Western-modern social scheme. In truth, the reformative modernization-project had not only fostered minorities, but amounted to women subjugation under both state and social patriarchy. And, unsurprisingly, women of those left out minority communities ended up being twice at risk of being orientalized and colonized by the two patriarchal models. As Madan Sarup writes:

> Every nation has its own story. Every nation has its myths, myths that can exploit contradictions. Nations make claims to land, and they make appeals to blood, native soil, homeland, motherland, fatherland [...] Nationalism has a popular and powerful fascination because it appeals to people, their need for belonging. [...] But if some belong to the nation, others do not. Nationalism, inevitably, excludes others from the ranks of the privileged group. Once nationalism gains momentum, others have to assimilate- or to resist. (1996: 131)

In the assimilation systems that the republican project had induced, comes into view the Turkification of the language, or the "linguistic cleansing" as feminist novelist Elif Shafak (2005) conceptualizes it.

In the Ottoman time, the alphabet derived from Arabic and Persian scripts and many words coming from them enriched the Ottoman language, with some minorities adopting other alphabets like Greek or Hebrew. Shafak depicts this as "a mixture of many things, a multi-ethnic fabric" (2005: 20). However, following the birth of the republic in 1923, a swift change to the Latin alphabet occurred in 1925, bringing about major socio-cultural splits between the past- pre-Republican- and the present, the minority and the majority, and the elite and the 'other'. I am impelled to agree that the adoption of the Latin alphabet, an apparatus of the modernization and Westernization project, might prove technical, but the strategy employed to change the language averred controversial. In reference to Shafak I quote:

> The alphabet is something more technical, but how can you change a language? We got rid of words coming from Arabic and Persian. As a result, very few people in Turkey question today the Turkeyfication of the language that we went through. I find that very dangerous because I think that linguistic cleansing is something comparable to ethnic cleansing. (Ibid.)

In concordance with Shafak, other scholars view language as "the political unconscious of the nation", an oppressive colonial instrument tooled to produce ethnic sites in which the minorities from different races (e.g. Kurds) and sects, classes and cultures were to be alienated (Joseph and Talbot 1990: 40). Similarly, the Turkish regime had broken with its Ottoman past through literature and the written, by inventing and re-inventing ethno-religious and linguistic spaces, in which the multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic were to be grouped around a unified lingual ideology begetter of prolific mythological thoughts (49). On a high note, historian Kemal Karpat states that "the history of the Turkish Republic and the history of contemporary Turkish literature are closely interwoven" in the sense that when the republican state decided to remold the Turkish culture, it resorted to literature as the chisel for carving social thinking and the individual in the pattern of its ideology (Karpat 1960: 287).

This brings me to the next point I wish to address here, the literary intelligentsia, or the cognoscenti, which intensified during the establishment of the secular regime in Republican Turkey. Sculptors of the Republican modern literature, the *language Harem*[4] represented an invisible hegemonic power, which coincidentally impoverished their productivity and creativity in the early years of modernization. Though back then women writers had remained disadvantaged by a men-dominated literary society, most female novelists descended from socially, politically and economically influential families, and therefore benefited from greater, Western-styled educational opportunities:

> They had taken upon themselves a pedagogic mission to educate the masses. They assumed they were above their characters, above the books they produced, and above their readers. […] In this context, literature has not only been one of the many constitutive forces of the nation-building process, but rather the constitutive force. The literary figures in countries of belated modernity assumed a far more commanding social role in society than Guy de Maupassant or Thomas Hardy ever did in their lifetime. (Shafak 2006: 24)

[4] The language harem is a mythical space, I imagined, which contains codes of nativeness, homogeneity, artifical neutrality and belongingness. Paradoxically, it reinforces discrimination between the privileged and the marginal, internal colonialism and hegemonic power structures.

In other words, the characters they created, the messages they conveyed, and the language they used were all deliberately chosen as part of the broader project of modernization. For, Turkish modernization and Westernization pivoted on women emancipation -with patriarchal benevolence- which in turn generated nationalist writers to account for a national literature as an essential element in the formation of the "national" individual[5] (Arat 1998: 118). Still, to this day in Turkey, literature is interlaced with political and social events. Likely, "this literature thrives upon the distinction between 'us' and 'them'" (Shafak 2006: 26). Hereby, I argue, female novelists were the reason and the result of a perspective that dominated, discriminated, orientalized and colonized women in Turkey. That is, the silencing of themselves and the silencing of 'other' women in their literary works.

In light of this historical background, this work analyses the loose ends and pitfalls of Turkish feminist theories that have emerged after the 1980s. Referred to as "white Turk" feminists, they are liberal bourgeois and neo-Kemalist, fostering the most influential Turkish "transnational feminist" frameworks (Arat-Koç 2007). Their rhetoric originates in Western models and is imbued with subalternizing meta-narratives that have so far gained hegemonic positions. Their standpoint has, however, re-invented a different form of orientalism -self-colonization - and has consequently negatively influenced the socio-political role of the feminist identity. A comprehensive definition of the Turkish "transnational feminism" would probably help the reader to perceive the critical dimensions of their discourse. The liberal bourgeois feminism promotes "sexual freedom, personal autonomy, consumption, life-style, and self-help for empowerment" (On this see Arat-Koç 2007: 49), while the neo-Kemalist[6] feminism emphasizes "the need to embrace a secular conception of Turkey and to defend Kemalist reforms for women- mostly women's place in the public sphere" (Ibid.). While many neo- Kemalists are not

[5] The modernization and westernization process of women could be mapped through the female characters in these novels. *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (1926); *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928) by Halide Edib; *Türk Kadını* [The Turkish Woman] (1931) by Nezihe Muhiddin; *Roman Gibi* [Like a Novel] (1969) by Sabiha Sertel; *Unveiled: The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* (1930) by Selma Ekrem.

[6] Nermin Abadan Unat, author of Women in Turkish Society (1981) and member of the Association for the Support of Contemporary Living (ÇYDD) established in 1989, and Türkan Saylan, former president of the association; are representatives of neo-Kemalist feminism. Whereas the liberal bourgeois type feminism is represented by members of the Association for Support and Education of Female Candidates (Ka-Der) founded in 1997, criticized for featuring explicit class discrimination (Meriç 2007).

necessarily neoliberal, both movements adopt "orientalism" and "culturalism" to herald women's issues in Turkey.

1.3. The Decolonial Feminist Paradigm In-Depth

The core of this dissertation has been devised to rethink and to redefine "white Turk" transnational-feminist theories (see above) within the framework of decolonialism and from decolonial feminist approach. Decolonialism- also-called decoloniality, decolonial turn or decolonial option- will thus make up the body of this work. To place it, decolonialism as a movement and epistemological standpoint can be situated in-between the narratives of modernity and the logic of coloniality (Mignolo and Vàzquez 2013). It is an approach that has been recently developed within the fields of humanities and social sciences, to connect the various experiences of 'otherness' initiated by the "imperial-colonial dimensions of modernity" (Tlostanova 2010: 19).

The concept of "decoloniality" however, was conceived in the Third World -with the collapse of the three world division and the rise of a new world order- and later dispersed in the First World through immigrant-thought, or "immigrant consciousness" (See Mignolo 2013). On the historical emergence of decoloniality Mignolo comments as follow:

> Modernity, postmodernity and altermodernity have their historical grounding in the Enlightement and the French Revolution. Decoloniality has its historical grounding in the Bandung Conference of 1955, in which 29 countries from Asia and Africa gathered. The main goal of the conference was to find a common ground and vision for the future that was neither capitalism nor communism. That way was "decolonization." It was not "a third way" à la Giddens, but a delinking from the two major Western macronarratives. (2013: 129)

At present, successors to decoloniality (to name a few: Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel and Madina Tlostanova) draw from outside the territorial and imperial epistemological 'box'. They delink from the colonial matrix of power (i.e. modernity/coloniality) and from the "linear history of paradigms, epistemes, and grand narratives of modernity" (Tlostanova 2010: 20). Moverover, they scrutinize "the illusion that there is no other way of thinking, doing and living" (Mignolo 2013: 133). To Mignolo this can be conceptualized as "modern/colonial racism", which is:

> …the logic of racialization that emerged in the sixteenth century, has two dimensions (ontological and epistemic) and one single purpose: to rank as inferior all languages beyond Greek and Latin and the six modern European languages from the domain of sustainable

> knowledge and to maintain the enunciative privilege of the Renaissance and Enlightenment European institutions, men and categories of thought. (Ibid.)

Decolonialists thus endorse 'border thinking', an epistemology of the *anthropos'* (the other), that revolves around singular, non-European thoughts (Mignolo 2013). According to Mignolo, both decoloniality and border epistemology are interrelated; the former entails a rupture with ways of living and methods of thinking previously dismissed by "Christian theology since the Renaissance", and later expanded "through secular philosophy and sciences"; border epistemology however, is a holistic apparatus- it involves thinking, sensing and doing- in which the politics of knowledge is ingrained in the 'local' body, and is anchored in local histories (2013: 129-133).

Taking the lead in the frame of independent thought, in this work I choose to deviate from the sustained nation-state feminism to dwell on decolonial feminist borders. In other words, rather than 'studying' or 'theorizing' women from different socio-cultural and racial backgrounds, I delink from "territorial and imperial epistemology" (Mignolo 2013), and show other possible epistemic zones from a decolonial lens. I would like to emphasize, however, that at no point do I perceive postcolonialism and decolonialism as antipodes, for both theories are deemed equally useful in the development and realization of this work.

This said, I will tackle 'decolonial feminism' with reference to Maria Lugones- an Argentinian feminist philosopher and creator of "colonial/modern gender system"- and to Madina Tlostanova- a decolonial (feminist) theorist and professor of postcolonial studies. To Mignolo and Tlostanova the decolonial feminist approach profoundly hints at the colonial matrix of power, which (see above) is linked with the Western hegemony and its logic of coloniality (2012: 2). And according to Lugones, decolonial feminism "offers a mixed analysis of the categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality", thus featuring actors hitherto excluded by discriminatory values (Lugones 2010: 41). This feminist perspective scrutinizes the modern/colonial gender system that nurtures the dichotomous logic. The model Lugones promotes emphasizes the necessity to travel to other people's worlds, to discover a myriad of worlds where "those who are the victims of arrogant perception are really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of decisions even though in the mainstream construction they are animated only by the arrogant perceiver and are pliable, foldable, file-awayable, classifiable" (18). Drawing on these insights, I

seek to analyze and to re-think the Turkish feminist impasse within a concept rooted in difference-recognition and solidarity. By adopting a decolonial approach, I try to map invisible and silenced identities whose difference in terms of class, race and religion has been downgraded by modern/secular narratives.

Therefore, the "loving perception" Lugones (1987) introduces will be used in reference to coalition-building, embracing differences and cherishing the visibility and solidarity of women from a myriad communities such as the Kurds, the Alawites, and the Islamists in Turkey, without colonizing 'the different'. This can only materialize however, if Turkish feminists, activists and theorists embrace an epistemic shift towards decolonial feminism and a 'decolonial imaginary', instead of a sheerly modernized and secularized social imaginary. On this I contend that literature and the process of storytelling should be viewed as powerful means for women to interchange spaces, that is "to travel" to other worlds, to understand plurality and multiplicity of selves and knowledges (Lugones 1987: 18). It is perhaps relative to add that border crossings, diaspora and diasporic subjectivities are concepts I deal with as I portray peculiar female characters. In this context, employing decolonial feminism in general provides me to trace the invisible and silenced female identities whose spiritualism, marginality, difference in terms of class and race are all undervalued within the grand narratives based on Eurocentric modernity and secularism.

Even though the 'difference' I hint at throughout this work might evoke the "politics of sexual difference" by Luce Irigaray, and seems to set forth similarities with Lugones' "recognition of difference" and "love between women", it nonetheless sets forth a distinctive perspective, which I lay out in Chapter six. For, gender, I argue, has been "the paramount to the process of decolonization" (Schiwy 2010: 125). As Freya Schiwy states, "social memory and subalternized knowledge is embodied and transmitted in gendered ways, but the enactment and representation of such links between knowledge and the female body in the discourse of decolonization has been a central point of debate" (126).

1.4. Towards Decolonial Aesthesis and Rethinking Aesthetics

In this project, I aim at introducing one additional step in my journey on decolonialism: "decolonial aesthesis". If - as I have so far proffered and will later detail- decolonialism

is a prospect for overcoming the plenum of modernity and coloniality (Mignolo and Vàzquez 2013), decolonial aesthesis, on the other hand involves "naming and articulating practices that challenge and subvert the hegemony of modern/colonial aesthesis. It starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied, not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception" (Ibid.).

As stated earlier, decoloniality and border epistemology go hand in hand and amount to a holistic apparatus of knowledge that not only involves thinking, but touches to the sensing and the doing. Parallel to this current, falls decolonial aesthesis which is described by Mignolo as "a critical intervention within the world of contemporary arts", yet different from re-invented everyday-life popular practices (culture, arts and other forms of sensing) hitherto devalued and dismissed by modern aesthetics (Mignolo and Vàzquez 2013). The difference between re-valuated practices and decolonial aesthesis doesn't rest in the re-existence of these practices, but in "biennales and curatorial projects" (Ibid.). In other words, decolonial aesthesis and modern aesthetics stand as perpetual rivals on a platform where the decolonial artist and curator struggle to "challenge the hegemonic normativity of modern aesthetic" (Ibid.). In this context, decolonial aestheSis comes to the fore with the idea that political, scholarly and artistic beliefs such as freedom and creativity are deeply bound with Western aesthetics, cutting off non-Western cultures from their own history and knowledge (Mock 2011).

AestheSis or aestheTics? Mignolo draws a keen distinction between the two terms. According to him, both terms derive from the Greek language and are not Eurocentric, since for the ancient Greeks, Europe was still a "vague geographical idea" earthed in wisdom and mythology (Mignolo and Vàzquez 2013). It wasn't until eighteenth-century Europe that the term "aesthetics" became Eurocentric and emerged as a "key concept for a theory of sensibility […] and emotions" to contrast with the rational (Ibid.). Aesthesis thus transpired from the local European history and became "the regulator of the global capability to "sense" the beautiful and the sublime" (Mignolo and Vàzquez 2013, Del Val 2013). At this point in the Aesthetic process, the latter converted into Esthetics, and "the colonization of Aesthesis through Esthetics" occurred (Mignolo and Vàzquez 2013, Del Val 2013).

This conversion similarly comprised the conversion of the particular into the universal; it "involved the re-writing of the history of aesthetics, converting what is particular theory that ties the perception of sensory stimuli with particular conceptions of beauty into a universal, naturalized conceptualization of beauty" (Mignolo and Vàzquez 2013, see also Del Val 2013:145). It has been thus assumed that contemporary philosophy and literature are Eurocentric, and that Eurocentricism is the pillar to present-time "common sense" and "the best that is thought and written" (See Shohat and Stam 1994: 1). Within this sense, Stam and Shohat warn the reader that by Europeans, they "refer not only to Europe per se but also to the "neo-Europeans" of the Americas, Australia, and elsewhere" (Ibid.).

From here I sail to examine traditional/colonial 'Western'-born epistemology and the universalized manifestations it has stirred to shape sociopolitical discourses- namely gender, race, civic nationalism and vernacular. In my attempt to 'delink', I talk about the aesthetic perceptions within the Turkish society that arose during the process of secularization and modernization, and highlight how the break-up from a theocratic Ottoman past, with its multi-beliefs and multi-cultural socio-political structure, had led to self-colonization. If "there is no modernity without coloniality" and "coloniality is constitutive of modernity" (Mignolo 2007: 162), I then assume that decolonial aesthetics not only challenge the self-colonizing aspects of Turkish literature, but offer new formulations that bring diversity into the literary world, albeit without imposing tenets or annihilating norms. I believe however, that decolonial aesthetics as a self-reliant movement remains prone to obstacles posited by contemporary aesthetics and their colonial strategies. Perhaps Elif Shafak's words- as she lays bare the obstacles of a female novelist with a Middle Eastern Muslim background- offer a better interpretation to this:

> Unfortunately today there is a growing expectation in this vein. This expectation works against non-Western authors more than any others. Let's say, if you are a 'woman novelist from the Muslim world', like me, then you are expected to write the stories of 'Muslim women'. This means writing about 'the problems of women under Islam'. This is what publishers want to buy and promote. This is what people want to read and tell. 'If you are an Algerian woman writer, write about women in Algeria' they say. Today's literary world has begun to attribute a function to fiction. People want to read books that they believe will help them to 'learn about the Other'. This is not an innocent expectation. (*Winternachten* 2008)

'Other' than Shafak, is Emine Sevgi Özdamar whose first novel won the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize, yet was equated with Scheherazade the narrator in the Arabian Nights,

and reduced to the “oppressed Persian virgin of King Shahryar” (See Konuk 2007: 233). The literary critical reception of Özdamar’s works were ingrained with ethnicist and orientalist biases from the Eurocentric literary canon. Therefore, in the afterword to the collection *Mother Tongue* (1994) she wrote, “I was accepted, but merely as a 'guest-writer”. To Konuk it was only towards the end of the 1990s that Özdamar’s writings’ reception shifted to a more politically engaged approach, the argument remains vague (Konuk 2007: 233).

All this brings me to conclude that decolonial aesthesis is a perspective that emanates from the margins and for the margins, but should manifest itself in artistic practices- in the written- and stretch beyond the walls of the imperial-global ‘hoi polloi’. Thus, this humble project stems from a strong will to show that ‘other’ artistic- novelistic-options can exist and coexist. They play out at the intersection between fictional representations (story telling) and the socio-political/ cultural/ ideological trajectories embedded in decolonial feminism. While I tackle literary and political intersections and treat novels as alternative spaces of identity formation, I touch upon the kaleidoscopic features of these spaces, whose narrative contests colonial and imperial modulations like secularism, civic nationalism (Turkism), and self-colonization. As Peruvian writer and Nobel Prize-winner Mario Vargas Llosa (2001) concludes, “branches of the humanities ― like philosophy, psychology, sociology, history or the arts―” appear to “have succcumbed to the irresistible pressure of the cancerous division and subdivision of knowledge, isolating themselves in increasingly segmented and technical areas of expertise, whose ideas and terminology are beyond the scope of ordinary men and women”. To him, “this can never happen to literature, even though some critics and theoreticians try to turn it into a science” (Ibid.). This is “because fiction does not exist to investigate a particular area of existence. It exists to enrich life through the imagination, all of life, this life that cannot be dismembered, broken up, or reduced to schema or formulas, without disappearing” (Ibid.).

1.5. *Zeitgeist*[7] of the Study: From Where I Stand, Breaking Silence and Voicing Complexity

> [Minorities] are not permitted irony or other heterogeneities of language and are bounded simply by the linear or one-dimensional constraints, the necessity to 'speak clearly' or risk suffering the burden of being translated, spoken for, represented in its double sense.
>
> (Sneja Gunew 1994)

While writing this dissertation from where I stand, I hear Gloria Anzaldua's lyrical voice, "I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my own voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue – woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence" ("How to Tame a Wild Tongue" 1987). Her lyrics insinuate the decolonial feminist trajectories I will employ throughout this dissertation. For, Anzaldua's Mestiza consciousness enacts the revolutionary persona "of subjugated knowledge", and unchains from colonial epistemology not only in the content, but also in the terms of the debate (See Mendoza 2016: 114). My feminist standpoint thus stems from the reservoir of women's lived experiences and their modes of thinking. Here, my trajectories follow the intellection of Sandra Harding and her claim on knowledge being situated and, "Starting off research from women's lives [that] will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order" (1993: 56). Feminist scholars besides Harding working within a number of disciplines like Patricia Hill Collins, Donna Haraway have also "advocated taking women's lived experiences, particularly experiences of (caring) work, as the beginning of scientific enquiry" (Ibid.).

Furthermore, this feminist epistemology challenges "colonial imaginary" (Perez 1999) and the "coloniality of knowledge and of being" (Mignolo 2013). In her debate on "imperial difference", Madina Tlostanova unveils a Eurocentric imaginary that subalternizes the Soviet and Ottoman empires, and their successors Russia and Turkey. She argues that feminisms within these regions cannot be understood by merely tucking them into "feminisms of color". Central to this conception is the analysis and critique of the relations between material experience, matrix of power and epistemology, and "of the

[7] Zeitgeist can be described as "the general intellectual, moral, and cultural climate of an era" "zeitgeist." Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, 2015.Web. 4 January 2015.

effects of power relations on the production of knowledge" (See Bowell 2011). This leads me to Maria Lugones' modern/colonial gender system, which implies a gender hierarchy "that grants civilized status only to those men and women who inhabit the domain of human" (Mendoza 2016: 117). How does this system operate? It is a discursive invention that implements a colonial legacy and succeeds to establish categories and rankings. It imposes a delusive ontology that elevates Western women over non-Western ones- or women in the West of Turkey from women in the Southeastern side of it- and legitimizes dichotomies that distinguish the civilized human from the natural primitive.

The parameters of concern through my research is inevitably influenced by a feminist epistemology that seeks to voice my own complexities within this context. That is, I was born into a Turkish migrant family in Amsterdam and grew up with a Atatürk-lover Central Anatolian, paradoxially, a traditionally covered mother who was educated to absorb sheer nationalist, Kemalist and secular notions on the one hand, and a Southeastern, conservative, Barako-Turkoman father with also Arabic and Kurdish origin on the other. My mother's religious views contrasted sharply with her sheer national-secular-Kemalist education, while father's childhood narrated years of discrimination by his nationalist teachers, who bluntly humiliated his accent and social background. It wasn't until he escaped school that father rebelled against Atatürk and his elitist team whom he adjudged perpetrators of an agony of disaster and humiliation that prevailed in the region. I grew up thus to two conflicting narratives; one epitomizing the West, the refined, the superior, the Turks, and another typifying the East, the others (Kurds, Arabs), the backwards and inferior.

To my mother's family, we were 'the Kurd's' children, and father was the 'citizen' [*Vatandaş*] obliged to the Turkish Republic for his 'citizenship'. We were perceived to have inherited an inappropriate primeval Eastern culture that inflicted honor killing on female family members for engaging in public spheres. It was not appalling for me to hear on my mother's side of the family that father would never grant me right to schooling and education under his primal dominant patriarchal ruling. In their heads, the image they had constructed of father was of a loose member of an extended culture of honor killing and women oppression. However, years later I opened my eyes to a different truth, to my paternal grandmother, a non-Turkish woman patently covered in tattoos from the chin down to her feet, a matriarchal figure and a prominent decision maker in her community.

Apparently, honor killing was more a complex issue than what I had been told; it was a traditional tribal act of vengeance collectively decided upon by community members from both genders, and victimized men and women equally.

Now years later in a present-day Turkey the government and the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) set off a bloody war, and colleagues from various universities mainly coming from Western Turkey would justify the clashes by preaching me that the region does not develop due to honour killings, pre-modern traditions, and immense gender gap on the basis of social and economical status. Ironically, according to a recent survey conducted by the Objective Research Journalism Program feminicide rate and range exposed distinguishing discrepancies between myth and reality, for instance, in Aegean cities like İzmir, Aydın and Muğla the number of victims was at least 20, in Southeastern cities like Şırnak and Siirt the number of victims are in the former one 2 and the latter 1 (*kadincinayetleri.org* 2015). Interestingly, the report reveals that only 6,2 % of the feminicide incidents were connected to honour killing. For sure I never belittle the 6,2 %; however, the enormous attention paid to "honour killings" by the Turkish society, politicians and feminists has a long history of externalizing 'the other Turkey' and 'other women/men' wishfull in "attributing it to tradition and/or ethnicity—a product of Kurdish and/or "feudal culture" in southeastern Turkey—rather than attempting to understand its relationship to modern Turkey, its structures and its institutions" (Arat-Koç 2007: 50). Recently reports are published exposing the fact that instead of the common belief the premature marriage issue persisting still in Turkey is not merely an Eastern Turkey problem but a general one (Düzen and Atalay 2014). This is a 'colonial' opprobrium that segregates people and regions into economically and mentally underdeveloped wraps incorporated through self-colonialism/orientalism in Turkey (See Mignolo 2009: 3).

My position is influenced by these colonial dichotomies. It thus stems from a decolonial feminist epistemology through which the helix of complexities I happen to embed extends. As a third-culture kid, I was schooled in Amsterdam-Noord in the Netherlands. I read the bible, sang hymns, went to the mosque on weekends and rarely, if ever, was conscious of my ethnic differences. In fact, it was after my family had settled down in Turkey that I started to develop a sense of 'otherness'. When I attended school in İzmir- a Westernized Aegean city- my Southeastern roots moored; fellow students often asked whether or not I lived with my family in a tent or a cave, since it was

commonly presumed that Southeastern communities didn't dwell in apartments. To this day, when friends from Izmir visit the Southeast, they seek 'modern' diners and places where they could escape to the evocative cultural and traditional spheres of this side of Turkey. These mystified conceptions are taught in school books and are fed into the populace imaginary by the media, which persistently empowers the Kemalist rhetoric that in turn has construed this part of Turkey as underdeveloped, primitive and anti-modern.

From there on, my family's unknowing move into a kemalist secular neighborhood had hindered my feeling of belonging to or connecting with my new environment. Neighbors blatantly expressed their intolerance to mother's headscarf, and our landlord openly admitted to father that he wouldn't have sold us his property had he known of our religious attitudes and my mother's scarf; for, he had mistaken us for a 'Westernized modern family coming from Holland'. Incidents of this kind had filled up my everyday life and had eventually put me in pursuit of an identity. For years and until my early university days, I had situated myself in a no man's land between two disputed grounds: my pious environment and my relatives' interest to fashion me into a secular socialist woman. Today, however, I identify myself as a Muslim woman with hijab, born and raised in the Netherlands, bearing Barako-Turkoman, Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic origins, the sum of which has broadened my outlook on West/East and North/South dichotomies.

Nonetheless, my eclectic identity is of a greater complexity than it may seem. For, I have found myself trapped in an intricate matrix of political currents moving through two distinct, yet interrelated bodies: the local and the global. At the local level are the conservative and patriarchal narratives of the government, the lurking Kemalist-nationalist secular rhetoric, and the sheer socialist ethnicist PKK denouncing religious communities in the region. And at the global level rises the minatory Islamophobia of the West, which directly concerns me as a veiled woman with a dual Middle-Eastern and Dutch identity. This twist takes me back to Spivak's (1983) question on whether or not the subaltern can speak, or in a different version, to whether or not the Muslim woman can speak? I believe the best answer to this lays in Sahar Aziz's words:

> Muslim women of all races and levels of religiosity face unique forms of discrimination at the intersection of religion, race, and gender since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US […] 9/11 transformed the meaning of the Muslim headscarf […] The debate no longer centers

> on whether the "veil" serves to oppress women by controlling their sexuality and, by extension, their personal freedoms and life choices or if it symbolizes choice, freedom, and empowerment for Muslim women. Rather, the Muslim headscarf now "marks" women as representatives of the suspicious, inherently violent, and forever foreign "Terrorist other" in our midst. (2012: 192)

In this context, Aziz observes that "Muslim women of all races and levels of religiosity face unique forms of discrimination at the intersection of religion, race, and gender" since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US" (2012: 192). To Aziz 9/11 "transformed the meaning of the Muslim headscarf", and continues her argument as follows:

> The debate no longer centers on whether the "veil" serves to oppress women by controlling their sexuality and, by extension, their personal freedoms and life choices or if it symbolizes choice, freedom, and empowerment for Muslim women. Rather, the Muslim headscarf now "marks" women as representatives of the suspicious, inherently violent, and forever foreign "Terrorist other" in our midst. (Ibid.)

Evidently, the 9/11 aftermath stands reborn in the present time of war against the proclaimed Islamic State. The infinite deluge of refugees fleeing their native lands towards Europe has engorged the latter with a raging xenophobia and Islamophobia, especially now after the Paris Attacks. Muslim feminist Philistine Ayad illustrates Islamophobia in an explicit cartoon she has drawn with reference to the November 2015 Paris Attacks. Her parody portrays a veiled woman with the peace logo printed on her chest and a stack of stones in her hands. Each stone symbolizes Boko Haram, ISIS, Charlie Hebdo and 9/11. The woman seems besieged by fingers pointed at her representing the Western media, bigots, racists and Islamophobes, altogether commanding her to apologize and to condemn extremism. To Ayad, terror cannot be linked to religion proper, since terrorists are abusively selecting aspects of the Islamic religion "Twisting and distorting them in order to justify their actions that are unjustifiable" (quoted in Payne 2015). I contend that there is more to Islamophobia than a threadbare dislike and prejudice against Muslims. It is a collective political force garrisoned in "Western imperial configurations" operating on a "racial matrix of power to which we can include Islamophobia as a modern-day imperial instrument to control authority economy, labor, media and knowledge" (See Mignolo 2006: 28). Thus, Islamophobia is "entrenched in the colonial horizon modernity" (Ibid.).

The rhetoric of war on terror, namely Islamic extremism, as Mehdi Hassan argues hides the fact that, for instance, there were zero suicide attacks in Iraq until 2003, while since then there have been 1,892 (*AlJazeera* Sept. 12, 2015). Most of us are also not

acknowledged about another fact that in Pakistan there happened to be only one suicide attack in the 14 years before 9/11; nevertheless, since then in fourteen years there have been 486 attacks (Ibid.). However, exposing the failures of the global military campaign to fight terrorism and unveiling the colonial aspect of the narratives employed at present does little to the increasing marginalization of Muslims in the West. In fact, Muslim communities in the West are burdened with the responsibility for the attacks, when in reality as minorities, veiled women in particular are the first victims of such attacks (On this refer to Yasser Louati, *AlJazeera* November 23, 2015).Thereupon, with reference to the Charlie Hebdo attack, Paul Giffard-Foret in his article entitled, "Defending Charlie Hebdo? Secularism, Islam and the War on Error", touches upon an essential point, that is, though the Charlie Hebdo caricatures with respect to the muslim community were offensive the fundamental question should be on who speaks and who is spoken for. Therefore, he invokes Gayatri Spivak's "useful distinction between political representation as vertretung ("stepping in someone's place") and between artistic representation as darstellung ("placing there") in her renowned essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (2015). To him, Spivak "suggests that representing is both "proxy and portrait"" (Ibid.). That is:

> Hence, one ought to speculate upon the complicity between "speaking for" and "portraying" (1988, 277). When a small group of armed terrorists self appointed to speak on behalf of oppressed Muslims, Charlie affirmed its right to represent, and mock, Muslims, while other parts of the (mainly white, secularist) Left now seek to defend the latter, after having dismissed Islamophobia as a valid category for many years[2]. In absolute terms, however, no representation seems more legitimate than the other, for in every circumstance, the subaltern cannot speak – that is, Muslims are prevented from speaking for themselves. Those Spivak calls "benevolent imperialists" include both the Liberal as well as the radical Marxist western Left, whose discourse always runs the risk of falling back into essentialism (strategic or not), becoming yet another case of "epistemic violence". (Ibid.)

And with regard to the subalternized women he continues, "If," for Spivak, "in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Ibid.)

From where I stand, I get used to the irony of advancements and progress of the human species within the twenty-first century by witnessing the exodus of stateless peoples ending up in refugee camps like that in Calais, namely the Jungle refugee camp, and hundreds of civilians being killed in airstrikes that are claimed to target the terror of

Isis or Daesh (Ross 2015). A stateless child is born every 10 minutes somewhere in the World, and fundamental notions like citizenship and humanrights have become questionable (Osborne and Russel 2015). Our century still sees the building of walls like that in West Bank, the Palestinian territory, physical form of razor and barbed wire fences are built to stop refugees, like much of the old iron curtain.

Towards the end of 2015 we have had discussions on why we should no more pay the regular tribute for Belgian King Leopold II, the bloody King who eliminated over 10 million people of Congo, in Brussels was cancelled (*Telesurtv* 2015). Clearly enough, the Belgian King "has become a symbol of western moral hypocrisy and its shameless celebration of colonialism" (Ibid.). Relatedly, another debate has sparked these days on how the 'white gaze' still dominates race perception in popular literature. Zenia D'Cunha in *First Post* asks the following question, "How does one visualise a particular character when reading a book?", to which she responds:

> Some authors provide an elaborate description of the characters' physical features, some others leave attributes to the reader's imagination, but very few authors explicitly mention the race or skin colour of a particular characters, unless it's essential to the plot. However, in a majority of popular western book series, audience tends to visualise protagonists as white, as is evident from on-screen adaptation, book covers or even fan art on the internet. (2015)

The debates that have sparked controvery D'Cunha touches upon is based on the film adaptation of J.K Rowling's bestselling *Harry Potter* series in which the Hermione Granger character is announced to be played by a black actress, namely Noma Dumezweni (Ibid.). Not surprisingly, the casting of a racialy diverse actress has prompted backlash from fans like it formerly happened to *The Hunger Games* and *Starwars*. As the 2015 Booker Prize Winner Jamaican author Marlon James says, "Be it in the books or in the onscreen adaptations, very few pieces of literature have protagonists belonging to different races. Be it the epic fantasy Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter or even Game of Thrones, most popular fantasy-based fiction tends to be derived from European myth and have European (read: white) characters" (Ibid.). Likewise, many other Hollywood movies and television shows like *Homeland* impudently insist on implementing the image of sadistic, barbaric and morally bankrupt muslim image to justify the war on terror (Ali 2015).

In conclusion, from where I stand I try to break the silence, voice complexities and call for an epistemic disobedience without privileging any race, culture, sex, religion, and community. Knowledge is socially situated, and so is mine while writing this dissertation. As a student of literature combined with cultural and feminist theories my goal through this part has been to unveil the basis of my engagement in a decolonial feminist epistemological standpoint by mainly hinting at my own complicated story. The underlying perspective of my writing is an attempt for the sake of mental decolonization, and as Anzaldua states, "I write because life does not appease my appetites and hunger. I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, you" ("Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers" 1983).

I write to share my fear with the passengers who terrifyingly watched me, a veiled woman, standing in a subway in Brussels right after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, ironically, I was scaringly mummbling my prayers to be protected from any attack by the same terrorists. I write to share the fear of the airport officials, and the security guard who took me to the police station at the Brussels airport. And I write to share both the fierce look of the officer at the checkpoint, but also the smile of the other officer asking sympathetically about my PhD.

1.6. Chapter Outline

This doctoral research begins with a literature review and analysis of how/why secularism has become a women's/ feminist affair, and why literature and the Turkish feminist paradigm along with the modernization/secularization package intertwine. I inquire into the complex concepts conceived in these novels, and consequently examine through a decolonial lens alternative trajectories and approaches to the pitfalls embedded within the Turkish feminist paradigm. As I delve into the main question, I explore the following,

- Within the Turkish context, how does modernization/secularization intertwine with the Turkish feminist paradigm and literature?

- How does writing a fictional work in a different language than the vernacular impact the anticipated conventional link between language, literature, society and feminist theory?

- Does this new identity construct a threat to reproduce or reify complete otherness in the already existing sexual, racial and social otherness among Middle-Eastern women? Within and outside their own culture? In brief, does resorting to a different language generate a new form of otherness?

- Can one assume that escaping to the vernacular, namely the politics and poetics of mother-language, offer a critical counter-trajectory to the Turkification and politics of the secular-nation state?

- In what way(s) do decolonial thinking/feminism and decolonial aestheSis constitute an alternative approach to the impasse generated by secularism and the rhetoric of modernity?

The main objectives of this dissertation are cited and detailed in the introductory chapter. In Chapter Two, instead of starting by taking the lead in the literary work of Shafak and Özdamar, I am compelled to emphasize the socio-political and historical spheres that have proselytized the Turkish feminist paradigm. Thereby, certain aspects of the novels and their positioning are expected to become perceptible for the reader. Chapter Three is two-fold; I first discuss the interplay between secularization/ modernization/ nationalization processes and aesthetics; I then try to build an analytical framework of the link between these processes, aesthetics and the language choice of the writers. Chapter Four covers Shafak's novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006). I deal with its narratives, female images, and its contribution to decolonial aestheSis from a decolonial feminist position. Chapter Five features Emine Sevgi Özdamar's two novels, *Life is a Caravanserai* (*Das Leben ist eine Karawanserai*) (1992) and *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (*Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn*) (1998) within the same context as Shafak's. I part from a common decolonial ground between Shafak and Özdamar and trace their aesthetic perceptions and juxtapose them with the mythical colonial/modern epistemologies. That is, both writers employ a literary stance that scrutinizes an utter rejection of perceptions and conceptions from non-European, traditional and religious/mystic epistemologies. Hereby I highlight Shafak and Özdamar's distinctive literary style spanning from a personal and historical (national and imperial) memory boom, from stories told by mothers and grandmothers; as both novelists travel back and

forth in time to revive the invisible and silenced legacies of their pre-nationalized, pre-modernized and pre-secularized communities.

Within this novelistic setting, I depict invisible, silenced and marginalized subjectivities, namely women from the Armenian and Turkish diaspora, working class, minorities and religious mystics who have all been dismissed by Turkish metanarratives underpinned in Eurocentric modernity. I highlight the decoloinal imagery and thus the pluriversality these novels present, and consequently counter-argue the hegemonies nourished and nurtured by the coercive ideological, socio-political and cultural structures of the Kemalist paradigm and social imaginary. I am inclined thus to show how trans-cultural writers shed light on these figures and bring them to the fore through their decolonial narratives by forwarding counter-memories and crucial historical socio-political phenomena. Shafak and Özdamar's novels become an open platform to ponder over marginalized identities, once upon a time disavowed by the Turkish feminist paradigm and feminist literary texts.

Chapter Six, the last stretch of this research, focuses on Mikhail Bakhtin's essay "Discourse in the Novel" from *The Dialogic Imagination: Chronotope, Heteroglossia* (1981). I cogitate on Bakhtin's perception of the novel as a revolutionary literary vehicle that shifts the position of power structures, especially through the part based on the chronotope. My main objective however, is to unveil the narrowness of his study; his theory, as I show, is not only Euro-centered, but critically neglects colonial/imperial relations and the modern/colonial gender paradigm that was later adopted by postmodern Western feminist movements. This argument however doesn't stand isolated, but intersects with the politics of sexual behavior from 'Écriture féminine' by French feminist Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. The Eurocentricism and phallogocentrism in Bakhtin's dialogics and sexual difference in 'Écriture féminine', both violate the subjectivity of Turkish female figures. By re-visiting decolonial aestheSis I show why literature/stories matter with regard to the impasse the Turkish feminist framework has come across. Finally, in this analytical frame, I see decolonial aestheSis and the decolonial feminist paradigm as an option for future orientations towards 'learning to un-learn in order to re-learn'. The concluding chapter is a summary to the main chapters and a brief discussion of the content.

Chapter 2

Mapping the Scope of a Social and Political History of the Turkish Feminist Paradigm and Modernization Interwoven with Literature

2.1. Introduction

> The professionals were the comrade-women, the epitome of the new Turkish female: idealized, glorified, and championed by the reformist elite. The women constituted the new professionals — lawyers, teachers, judges, managers, clerks, academics… Unlike their mothers they were not confined to the house and had the chance to climb the social, economic, and cultural ladder, provided that they shed their sexuality and femininity on the way there. More often than not they wore two-piece suits in browns, blacks, and grays — the colors of chastity, modesty, and partisanship. They had short haircuts, no makeup, no accessories. They moved in defeminized, desexualized bodies.
>
> Elif Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) 140

These words by the Turkish feminist novelist Elif Shafak perceptively portray the pioneer 'daughters' of the Turkish Republic. Shafak here depicts the foremost Turkish Republican women (i.e. Kemalist women) who are still today seen as the showcase of modernization, Westernization, and secularization. But, most importantly, these women according to the official discourse of the Turkish state represent the first feminists, that is the first emancipated women. Since the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, Turkish feminism has played a major role as a social movement and has become a significant research area which has opened up spaces for analyzing, debunking, and criticizing specific power structures in Turkey. According to Nermin Abadan-Unat, a pioneering feminist and sociologist who profited from the Republican reforms:

> To radically change the status of Turkish women and transform them into responsible, self-confident citizens was one of the main aspirations of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk. He cherished the ideals of equality between the sexes, equal opportunity for education, and family life not based upon a lifelong tie of one-sided bondage. These ideals led Atatürk to focus his attention mainly on the elimination of polygamy, sex differentiated legislation and traditional Islamic ethical norms. (1981: 5)

Concerning the relation of women to the politics of egalitarianism and emancipation, Nilüfer Göle, professor of sociology and author of *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (1997), states, "Within the Kemalist paradigm, women were the bearers of Westernization, carriers of secularism and actresses in the public realm. They affirmed the civilizational conversion" (2004: 13).

Nevertheless, if we carefully delve into the passage quoted above from Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* we will realize that this idealized portrayal seems to conceal a Janus-faced positioning of these emancipated women. Shafak initially draws our attention to the new Turkish female image which is imbued with a novel sense of progressivism and self-confidence to participate in the changing social, economic, and political sphere. Accordingly, this standpoint detaches them from their domesticated and secluded mothers, the late Ottoman women. In "Turkish Feminism: A Short History" (1989), Nükhet Sirman, an outstanding feminist figure in Turkey, argues that Atatürk, and so the Kemalist cadre of the nation, "were trying to create a Turkish as opposed to an Ottoman identity" (4). Göle goes further and illustrates how the Republican reforms were a state-sponsored modernization project whose main target was to convert women from an Ottoman-Islamic selfhood to a Turkish-Western one (2004: 13).

In the passage of Shafak quote above, while the narrator highlights the social and political awakening of Republican women, she then abruptly indicates that the reformed status is available only if "they shed their sexuality and femininity on the way there". Moreover, the narrator allows us to grasp the underlying patriarchal and hegemonic perception behind the façade of emancipated, secularized, and modernized Republican women by drawing our attention to how the characteristics and colours of their clothing have been chosen to symbolize "modesty", "chastity", and "partisanship".

In the introductory chapter I focused on how literature, specifically fiction, became one of the fundamental tools for preaching the rhetoric of modernization, westernization, along with the so-called Kemalist feminist discourse, which emerged right after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic. Instead of starting off directly with the close reading of Shafak and Özdamar's novels within this chapter as would be expected, I decided to observe the complicated historiography of the "woman question" grounded on Islam, nationalism, secularism and modernism in Turkey.

To continue with the supposed emergence of Turkish feminism, Deniz Kandiyoti, with reference to the devotedly Kemalist Âfet İnan, author of *The Emancipation of the Turkish Woman* (1962), defines the new Turkish woman as a self-sacrificing "comrade woman" (quoted in Moghadam 2003: 91). The Republican female image is "an asexual sister-in-arms whose public activities never cast any doubt on her virtue and chastity"

(Ibid.). In this sense, the portrayal of the emancipated Turkish woman is inextricably bound up with a patriarchal and hegemonic nationalization project of Turkish men. As Kandiyoti writes, "Just like Western colonisers who used the 'plight of Oriental women' as a hallmark of the savagery and depravity of the colonised and as a justification of the mission incumbent upon their own civilizational superiority, modernist reformers bemoaned the condition of women as a clear symptom of backwardness" (2004: 47). Valorie Vojdik further argues that the bodies of women have been symbolic sites for political struggles throughout history both within Turkey and within the global community (2010: 665). Thus, the reformed and transformed image of women had great symbolic and strategic importance. As Kandiyoti puts it, the Republican Turkish women of the time were "emancipated but not liberated" (1987: 317).

Given this much touted improvement in women's status which is associated with the founding of the Republic, an awkward question arises as to why particular female identities (e.g. Kurdish, Alewite, and working class women) still remain substantially under-represented in both national and local politics. The same question also applies to the most prominent so-called "transnational" Turkish feminist paradigms (i.e. liberal bourgeois and neo-Kemalist feminisms). Sedef Arat Koç claims that both feminisms merit the label "white Turk" who "see feminism as a modernizing and civilizational project" and have a colonizing perspective towards "other" women (2007: 49). Representatives of these feminist paradigms have invented a different form of orientalism, namely self-colonization, which has negatively affected the socio-political role of the feminist identity. Additionaly, Arat Koç would elaborate on the notion of "white Turk" feminism as follows:

> The discourses of whiteness that are implicitly or explicitly present in some of the dominant discourses in Turkish feminisms affect the capacity of these feminisms to reach across class, ethnicity, and regional and rural/urban differences, and to represent the different voices and interests of women differently and unequally situated in Turkish society; they also affect the capacity of Turkish feminists to engage in egalitarian, mutual, and inclusive transnational relationships with women's and feminist groups in the Middle East. (Ibid.)

Performing coalitional resistance, solidarity, and agency has still not become a major goal for Turkish feminism.

To make this pitfall regarding Turkish feminism more explicit, one needs to explore how the project of modernization was undertaken in Turkey. The notion of

modernization I employ here refers to 'Western modernity', which was implemented with authoritarian means by the Kemalist ruling cadre on a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Ottoman society. One must bear in mind that the Ottoman empire possessed a theocratic character based on Islamic law and ruled over predominantly muslim communities. It is true that the Ottoman governing system was built on patriarchal and hegemonic interests of Sharia law. With regard to women, the social structure of Ottoman society was grounded on segregation, and women were not allowed to participate in social life (Yorgun 2013: 1). Sharia law strictly enforced the veiling of women, and women were prohibited from wearing certain forms of attire considered inconsistent with Islam (Vojdik 2010: 667).

Therefore, with the advent of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk and his comrades had to engage in the enormous task of abolishing every religious and traditional norm that would stand against the whole package of modernization. Women at this point were to play the vital role. As for the Republican ruling cadre, women's equality to men would be the most explicit proof of Turkey's commitment to Westernization and secularization (Moghadam 2003: 93). On the other hand, as the women's rights activist Pınar Ilkkaracan argues, "women's rights granted by Kemalists were intended to destroy links to the Ottoman Empire and to strike at the foundations of the religious hegemony" (2008: 43). Unlike with Western European feminists, the experience of republican Turkish women of feminism did not turn into a movement struggling for equal rights to vote and egalitarianism. On the contrary, "the founding fathers promoted women's public roles and changing status with patriarchal benevolence" (Arat 1998: 118). This therefore raises the question of how Western feminist discourses were received prior to the emergence of Turkey's own feminist movement in the eighties and what the reason was for this significant delay. Translation of Western feminists texts like that of Simone de Beauvoir only happened after the sixties and de Beauvoir was only accepted as a feminist writer in Turkey after the eighties (Koş 2008: 61). While westernization, secularism, and modernism were imported into Turkish society, there was almost no reception of Western feminist discourses. Today Western feminist paradigms are quite influential; however, post-colonial or decolonial feminist discourses are still a long way off for the Turkish feminist framework.

In order to create thoroughly new political identities within the new political and social milieu of republican Turkey, all the apparatuses of society needed to be directed towards the common goal of replicating the much-admired Western civilization. Zeynep Karahan Uslu describes the fissures which opened up in Turkish society as a result of this project of secularization and modernization as follows:

> This project was designed by the European-oriented elites at the center of Turkish power in the early 20th century. It has, by and large, been successful, facilitating material progress and forging a unified nation by achieving the homogenization of society, thus creating a distinct Turkish identity. Turkey's modernization project also entailed a scientific-based positivistic understanding of the world, thus promoting a non-religious Western-type of society as the precondition for progress. This positivistic approach however, created public/elite, center/periphery dichotomies. The general public remained religious while the elites were secular; the European oriented elites at the center adopted a commensurate style of life; the largely Anatolian public remained non-European in their orientation. (2008: 43)

Shafak is also one of the very few feminists who often criticizes this hastily implemented project of transformation carried out by the Kemalist ruling cadre:

> No nation has undergone a more sweeping social and cultural transformation in such a short span of time as Turkey. The transformation from the multiethnic Ottoman Empire to a supposedly homogeneous Turkish Republic was radical and hurried. Turkish modernization entailed a massive restructuring carried out from above. Its architects were the military, political, and cultural elite. As influential as the army and the politicians were, eventually it was the cultural elite that provided a legitimate basis for the new order. The center of this massive project being the making of a new culture, a new language, and a new ideal, the intelligentsia played a prominent role in generating a consensual hegemony. (2006: 24)

In this sense, it is obvious that the process of modernization along with the reforms regarding women were only cherished by an *elite* minority. Nevertheless, in the West these were forged by the combined "forces of long-term macrolevel change processes (industrialization, urbanization, proletarianization, education, and employment) and collective action (social movements and revolutions)" (Moghadam 2003: 79).

Accordingly, literature and language also shared the same fate with the swiftly transformed social, cultural, and political consciousness in terms of belatedly catching up with modernity. In fact, the Turkification of the alphabet in 1925 implicitly reveals one of the dangerous characteristics of modernization, secularization, and nationalism which has led to severe ruptures within Turkish society. The literary intelligentsia were expected to play the role of social architects by creating "a national language and a national literature. This literature, in turn, thrived upon the distinction between 'us' and 'them'

(Shafak 2006: 26). It seems, then, that the rhetoric of enlightenment, progressivism, and modernity were all notions of the vocabulary of a made-up myth which re-invented patriarchy, hegemony, and fatal dichotomies.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, a primary dynamic of great importance which developed in parallel with the Turkish feminist framework literary texts (i.e. fiction) written by prolific female writers. Halide Edip Adıvar (*The Shirt of Flame*, 1924), Fatma Aliye (*Groaning*, 1910), and Suat Derviş (*The Black Book*, 1921) are early examples of feminist literary figures who undertook the pioneering role of manifesting the portrayal of the emancipated and modernized Turkish woman through their novels. Essentially, novels started to become one of the main mediators of the feminist perception before long. As Sibel Irzik reveals, "The Turkish novel has seen itself as a means of social critique and mobilization ever since its beginnings during the last decades of the nineteenth century... [often] exhibit[ing] a preoccupation with social and historical themes" (2003: 554). Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that this link between the Turkish feminist framework and novels written by female intellectuals generally possessed an elitist, categorizing, modernist, and top-down manifestation of particular female role models which reflected Turkish feminism's quite problematic preconceptions.

In this context, Elif Shafak and Emine Sevgi Özdamar have produced literary works of particular interest because they have chosen to write in English and German respectively, thus indicating their border-dwelling position. Paradoxically, they are able to use these languages which are closely associated with imperialism and colonialism to subject the nationalist project of Turkification and to ressurect through fiction writing silenced languages (i.e. Arabic), aesthetic perceptions, and oral traditions (i.e. sufi and religious tales). Nevertheless, their most significant subversive characteristic is their portrayal of female characters being no less invisible, silenced, and subalternized within the Turkish feminist framework and novels affiliated with it as outside it. Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Özdamar's *Life is a Caravanserai* (1992) and *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (1998) are novels that contribute to the decolonial feminist framework and decolonial aesthesis. In fact, their most outstanding feature is to generate a fictional response to the Turkish feminist identity crisis. These literary works bring to light the underlying enigmatic and questionable unconscious of the Turkish feminist approach.

Notwithstanding their noteworthy characteristics regarding their literary positioning of excavating the hidden struggle of dichotomies and thickened borders regarding the Turkish feminist approach, I will only tangentially refer to these notable literary representations throughout this chapter. In order to perceive the significance of these novels and their role as fictional responses to the pitfalls of the Turkish feminist paradigm, it is necessary to examine the *terminus a quo* of "the woman question" and its evolution in time.

2.2. Is Secularism Simply an Impasse for the Turkish "State"?

The question remains whether the Kemalist regime, by creating a modern social imaginary with its secularized *featured actresses*, actually succeeded in demolishing the autocratic, theocratic, and so patriarchal structure of the Ottoman Empire. The feminist scholar Saba Mahmood states that "the secular and the religious are not opposed but intertwined both historically and conceptually such that it is impossible to inquire into one without engaging the other" (2009: 146). Talal Asad in *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (2009) highlights a different aspect of secularism which eliminates all institutional and symbolic affiliation with religion. To Asad the willful assualt on images and words — that is to say, religious symbols implemented with an authority to control the truth in certain spaces — "has a long history of transcending the distinction between the religious and the secular. Like iconoclasm and blasphemy, secular critique also seeks to create spaces for new truth, and, like them, it does so by destroying spaces that were occupied by other signs" (33). Emin Fuat Keyman remarks that, especially in recent years, Turkish secularism has been severely criticized for being a mechanism of political and social control, in particular because it fails to act impartially, using the legal apparatus of the state to ban its political rivals such as the Welfare Party and the Virtue Party among other intolerant acts. In this way, Turkish secularism ends up "work[ing] against representative democracy and pluralism" (Keyman 2007: 225). Thus, unfortunately, the Turkish approach to secularization constantly gives rise to serious conflict in contemporary Turkish politics and society.

From another standpoint, Taha Parla and Andrew Davison, contributers to the volume *Secularisms* (2008), take a thoroughly different approach in analyzing the secularization of Turkey. They note that Turkish secularization and modernization is

based on the French *laïcité* which possesses a seperationist politics, i.e. political (and social) arrangments which separate religion and politics (60). Nevertheless, they claim that secularism and laicism do not rest on the same practical and theoretical perspectives (Ibid.). French laicism separates religion and politics, but laicist politics "also may retain an official or recognized status for religion for the reason that a laicist state may be governed by believers who wish to institutionalize or recognize a non- or an anticlerical interpretation of a relgious tradition" (Ibid.). On the other hand, secularism is defined as accomodationist for religion. Joan W. Scott elucidates the difference between laicism and secularism by drawing our attention to a comparison between the American and French models:

> In America, home to religious minorities who fled persecution at the hands of European rulers, the separation between church and state was meant to protect religions from unwarranted government intervention […] In France, separation was intended to secure the allegiance of individuals to the republic and so break the political power of the Catholic church […] In France, the state protects individuals from religion; in America, religions are protected from the state and the state from religion. (2007: 91–2)

Parla and Davidson would probably agree with Scott's 'laicism/separationist' model, but not so much with her 'secularism/accommodationist' model. These political scientists view secularism through the lense of George Jacob Holyoake, a British writer who first coined the term. In *The Principles of Secularims Illustrated* (1871), Holyoake argues that secularism has overtones of atheism. Accordingly, Parla and Davidson perceive the term *secularism* as "fully non-religious, irreligious, even anti-religious" (2008: 60). However, my argument is that both laicism and secularism serve the grand-narratives of one particular civilization which is the modern West and Christianity. Similarly, Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age* (2007) hints at this aspect of secularization whose origin dates back to the Latin Christendom that obtained "a drive to make over the whole society to higher standards" (63). Thus, secularism is actually intertwined with religion as Saba Mahmood had earlier argued.

Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini (2008) remark that the questioning of secularism gained a new phase with the attacks of September 11, 2001. They argue that the attacks were, basically, "directed against the economic and military power of the United States, the sole superpower in the world" (2). As a result, the attacks "initiated a major shift in geopolitics, one that has led to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and to major

shifts in domestic policy in the United States and Europe in the name of 'security'" (Ibid.). Subsequently, they emphasize how politicized Islam is accused of being the main culprit for the problem of violence and terrrorism around the globe and how this has given new immediacy to the question of secularism (Ibid.). They draw our attention to a less examined facet of secularism:

> Secularism, with its promise of universal reason, is widely hailed by both the right and the left as the most powerful protection from the dangers of fundamentalism. Specifically, secularism is central to the Enlightenment narrative in which reason progressively frees itself from the bonds of religion and in so doing liberates humanity. This narrative poses religion as a regressive force in the world, one that in its dogmatism is not amenable to change, dialogue, or nonviolent conflict resolution. This Enlightenment narrative separates secularism from religion and through this separation claims that secularism, like reason, is universal. However, this narrative also places secularism in a particular historical tradition, one that is located in Europe and grows out of Christianity. (2008: 2)

Considering this standpoint, a recent intellectual current termed "decolonialism" describes the rhetoric of modernization by establishing a link between secularism, Western Christendom, and Western types of imperialism. Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova reflect their perspectives through the lense of decolonialism by indicating that both secularization and modernization are hiding the logic of "global coloniality" (2012: 8). Furthermore, with respect to philospher Castro-Gómez's reflections on modern epistemology, Mignolo hints at the foundational assumption of the linkage between modernity and secularism. That is, modern epistemology historically emerged from the assumption which "is obtained from a zero-point-of observation" that led to the formation of the modern/ colonial world (2007: 162). In that sense, the modern/colonial matrix "went hand in hand, in the sixteenth century, with theology; the eyes of God as the ultimate warranty of knowing", thereupon, "secularization displaced the eyes of God for the eyes of Reason and the authority of the modern subject" (162). On the basis of a decolonialist thinkers' approach, Talal Asad likewise finds it necessary to ask why the idea of modernity has turned out to be "hegemonic as a political goal, what practical consequences follow from that, and what social conditions maintain it" (2003; 13). In *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003), Asad argues that secularism is centrally located within the paradigm of modernity. Secularism as a doctrine, which resides within the modernization project, is basically questioned for its close connection "with the rise of a system of capitalist nation-states" that possess "unequal power and prosperity" (7). As a consuequence, each of these states holds "a

collective personality that is differently mediated and therefore differently guaranteed and threatened" (Ibid.).

In view of all these perspectives on and analyses of secularism, where does Turkish secularism, or rather laicism, really reside? Turkey is recognized as the state which undertook the most radical secular revolution within the Muslim world. Nevertheless, the Turkish case is paradoxical because it represents both the laicist and securalist models and at the same time neither of them. What came to be called laicism in Turkey is neither strictly separationist nor accommodationist. Indeed, the Kemalist regime removed religion from politics, abolished the Sharia and, perhaps most significantly, the veil for women, which was the most apparent religious symbol interrupting the secular "social imaginary" (Göle 2002: 186). For Göle, "secularism has become a women's affair, a women's quarrel. But it is a quarrel that matters greatly beyond Turkey as well because, in the Muslim context of modernity, women have been the makers of democratic public space" (Göle 2008: 35). Therefore, Turkey's experience with secularism is described as, "a modern social imaginary through gendered, corporeal, and spatial performance" (Göle 2002: 186). A transformative process occurs within certain common spaces which then obtain additional symbolic value. As a result, these common spaces "become public sites of visual modernity and gendered secular performance" (Ibid.).

While the veil of the woman was perceived as a religious symbol interrupting the social imaginary, Kemalist laicism did not take religion out of the state, instead founding the General Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, or DIB). The aim of the DIB was to "invest the authority of teaching 'the people' the correct Islam through the good offices of state personnel" (Parla and Davidson 2008: 63). The Kemalist nation-state "not only subordinated religion to the state, they also used and manipulated religion, that is, correct Kemalist Sunni Orthodox version of Islam, for their own particular political purposes" (64).

We might wonder then, if the Ottoman Empire possessed an overwhelming majority of muslims, how did the Republican nation-state ever succeed in forcing through its radical secular policies? In part, this overlooks the multi-confessional and multi-ethnic character of the Ottoman Empire which was managed through the millet system which

Fatih Öztürk defines as a state system that sees people "not on the basis of ethnicity or language, but religion" (2014: 2). Regarding the multi-ethnic nature of the Ottoman state, while historians like Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis have highlighted some of the drawbacks of this, Aron Rodrigue instead emphasizes the point that "[Ottoman] society existed [In this context] where 'difference' instead of 'sameness' was paramount" (SEHR, 27 February 1996). As he continues:

> This is not the same as pluralism. The 'difference' each group was ascribed, or ascribed to itself in its self-representation, was not articulated on the basis of rights. Rather, nothing in the political system of the Ottoman Empire called for different groups to merge into one. The difference was a given and accepted as such. That particular arrangement, therefore, renders invalid all our terms for debate about minority/majority, which are all extraordinarily Europe-centered – and in many cases post-Enlightenment-Europe-centered. In the Ottoman situation, almost all aspects of social relationships and political power were organized in profoundly different ways. This was a world that recognized and accepted that groups did not necessarily have to share similarities to have a place in the overall arrangement. Instead, the minority/majority problem is one that is rooted in the appropriation of the public sphere by nation-states in Europe and the subsequent questioning of the institutionalization of that appropriation. (Ibid.)

Coming back to the Turkish Republic, did the nation-state ideology provide the expected egalitarian opportunities on an equal basis to the non-muslim and non-Turkish communities? In that sense, if the state intended to sever all linkages between individuals and religion for the sake of secularism, what would the positioning of the post-Ottoman religious-oriented societal groups be? As Jose Casanova argues, "ultimately the project of constructing such a (secular) nation-state from above is likely to fail because it is too secular for the Islamists, too Sunni for the Alevis and too Turkish for the Kurds" (2001: 1064). On the other hand, we still have to keep in mind that there were the non-muslim minorities (i.e. Jews and Armenians). Şerif Mardin, a Turkish sociologist, describes the process which Turkey has gone through as a result of the apparatuses of modernity and secularism. For Mardin, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in the process of making the Turkish state,

> ... took up a non-existent, hypothetical entity, the Turkish nation, and breathed life into it. It is this ability to work for something which did not exist as if it existed, and to make it exist, which gives us the true dimensions of the project on which he had set out and which brings out the utopian quality of his thinking. Neither the Turkish nation as the fountainhead of a 'general will' nor the Turkish nation as a source of national identity existed at the time he set out on this task. (1981: 208–9)

All the grand narratives on modernity and secularism Atatürk attempted to enforce could only address and reach the Republican elite cadre. These grand narratives which included

elements based on Western modernity would constantly define concepts of the non-Western context as insufficient and anachronistic. Thus, when these "concepts of Western modernity travel into different contexts, they often acquire not only different meanings but also an unexpected intensity. Secularism is an example of this phenomenon" (Göle 2002: 184). According to Göle, secularism engenders conflict because of its roots and historical development in the West, which can be regarded as marginal within the Muslim context (Ibid.). She then ends up concentrating on the Turkish project of secularism, "Yet in the Turkish case, for instance, we observe not only its role in nation-state building and its penetration into civil and military elite ideology but also its emergence in civil society and in particular in women's associations. Secularism works as a social imaginary" (Ibid.).

On the basis of this brief elaboration of the link between Turkish secularism and the rhetoric of modernization, I have tried to map the historical and socio-political milieu which initiated the emergence of Turkish feminist theory. Taking this standpoint into consideration, I will scrutinize the impotence and pitfalls of the Turkish feminist paradigm which characterizes it even today as a result of the hegemonic implementation of modernism, enlightenment, and progressivism through the secularization process. I argue that such aspects re-invent a Turkish version of imperial-colonial configuration that continues to hamper any progressive and effective agency within the Turkish feminist framework. That is, the Turkish feminist discourse has engaged in hegemonic perceptions and subalternizing meta-narratives derived from Western paradigms. As we would expect, their standpoint has re-produced a different form of orientalism, namely self-colonization, which has negatively affected the socio-political role of the feminist identity. Therefore, to get a whole picture of what is meant by imperial-colonial configuration and self-colonization regarding Turkish feminist framework, I will delve further into the genealogy of "the woman question" and its evolution in time.

2.3. Late Ottoman Feminism and Secularism Through Sociopolitical Activism

The official Turkish feminist discourse generally insists that "the woman question" never really existed in late Ottoman society. Accordingly, it is asserted that the Ottoman empire was built on Islamic monarchy (i.e. Sharia), in which women were excluded from the public sphere. Besides seclusion, women's attire was also regulated by the Sharia, so they

were in a way deprived of the liberty to choose their own clothing (Davis 1986: 196). Education was mainly received by the women of the Ottoman palace and the elite class. Thereupon, Âfet İnan, a Kemalist historian and author of *The Emancipation of the Turkish Woman* (1962) argues that Turkish women lost their status with the transition to Islam. The award-winning feminist writer Erendiz Atasü, in a lecture entitled "The Language Revolution and neo-Ottomanism" in 2011, similarly, argued that Turks have been enforced to forget their real history with the adoption of Islam. Indeed, "as the Kemalist ideology sought to synthesize Western secular, political, and social forms with those of the pre-Islamic Turks, so did the image of the new Turkish woman come to embody characteristics of the modernized Western woman" (Barzilai-Lumbroso 2008: 30).

With respect to the Kemalist accounts, the official story of the Turkish feminist paradigm is supposed to start with the advent of the Turkish Republic when the reforms against wearing the veil were instituted in 1925 (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 229) and women's suffrage was introduced in 1934. Another significant revolution was then the abolition of polygamy with the adoption of the European civil code (Abadan-Unat 1981: 6). As Atasü portrays it, the ideal Republican woman was "a citizen free from the darkness of illiteracy, able-minded, patriotic, […] aware of her rights of education, […] confident of herself to be able to get through the social function men undertake, advocating monogamy, grateful to the Republic and strong with the desire of serving it" (1998: 132). All these reforms and revolutions have been regarded as the genesis of the secularized and modernized Turkish nation-state and the feminist framework.

The widely accepted official discourse is actually only half true, as the process of secularization, modernization, and disputes about women's socio-political position took place long before the Republican period. For instance, contrary to these Kemalist perspectives, Arzu Öztürkmen argues the following:

> The Republican concept of women's emancipation apparently was not as progressive as Turkish women had so far been indoctrinated to believe; instead, this concept of emancipation was a regression from the demands and thematic richness expressed by Ottoman feminists. That such nineteenth-century Ottoman publications were in Arabic script, illegible to the Republican generation, had long postponed a thorough analysis of the Ottoman women's movement. This movement was fully aware of the rise of Western feminism and had already begun negotiating their roles and status in domestic space. Ottoman women debated their rights in education and political spheres, and adopted a more assertive discourse than their successive Republican generations. (2007: 173-4)

On the other hand, one has to bear in mind that these Ottoman proto-feminists of the time mainly had ties with the palace like feminist authors Suat Derviş and Fatma Aliye who belonged to the elite cadre. While the Republican feminists like Âfet İnan, Lâtife Bekir, and Lâmia Refik possessed common characteristics in terms of being highly supportive towards the Kemalist ideology, a complete new version of patriarchy, Ottoman feminists held a more complex position. For instance, Fatma Aliye "laid down an epistemological authority for women to engage in the public sphere", but then strictly within a Islamic framework (Paulson Marvel 2011: 5). However, Suat Derviş, known as the Virginia Woolf of Turkey, comes to the fore as a Marxist feminist. After the proclamation of the Republic, much like other feminists such as Nezihe Muhiddin and Fatma Aliye, Derviş was denigrated by the founding fathers of the new state. Especially after the 1930s, she could no longer use her own name because of her articles published in newspapers which criticized the rise of Nazism and fascism (Sabah Febr. 18, 2007).

Debates regarding the position of women in Ottoman society need to acknowledge the fact that the themes of secularism and modernization in Turkish history date back to the eighteenth century. Through the first half of the eighteenth century with the losses of territory, the Ottomans experienced a shock which made them question the ideology behind these severe reverses — above all, the belief in conquest as a means to propagating Islam (Mardin 2000: 135). Thus, the first signs of thinking about modernization was also the result of the bitter realization of Western superiority with respect to military capabilities and state control. While the Ottomans were ruled under the Sharia, it was still a society that had "a heterogeneous, multi-religious and multi-ethnic population which made dealing with difference and particularity an important issue. In terms of the way in which it dealt with particularity, Ottoman universality was radically different from the universalism of the modern nation state" (Baban 2004: 10). There was no single community, instead the Ottoman "millet system" ensured the existence of community rights and organizations of the non-Muslim groups in the empire (Ibid.). Here we have to keep in mind that the revolution of modernity that promises a modern society is intrinsic to the nation and nationalism (Smith 1998: 3). Therefore, the Ottoman modernization project which desired to strenghten the army and the control of the state would never save the 'sick man of Europe', the Ottoman Empire. Under these circumstances, a series of reforms were promulgated in the first quarter of the nineteenth century under the influence

of "bureaucrats as well as young thinkers educated in Europe" who initiated debates on "the meaning of the French revolution and the new ideas emanating from it" (Sirman 1989: 2). Parla and Davidson depict this period as follows:

> The Ottoman Empire had undertaken several bureaucratic, civil, and educational reforms aimed at enhancing lay control over Islam, reforms that were themselves, arguably, part of the pattern set by the Tanzimat movement which sought to reorder the empire in more bureaucratically and technically efficient ways. (2008: 69)

Talal Asad, with reference to sociologist Jose Casanova, points to three elements that are essential to the development of modernity: **(1)** Increasing structural differentiation of social spaces resulting in the separation of religion from politics, economy, science, and so forth; **(2)** the privatization of religion within its own sphere; and **(3)** the declining social significance of religious belief, commitment, and institutions (Asad 2003: 181). Thus, the reforms carried out through the Tanzimat proves the close relation between the rhetoric of modernity and secularism.

Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, authors of *Turkish Islam and the Secular State* (2003), argue that the Tanzimat reforms were a significant step that accelerated the secularization intended by Sultan Mahmud II. The most obvious feature of "the innovations initiated by Mahmud II was the emergence of an Ottoman state based on secular aspects of sovereignty as contrasted with the medieval concept of an Islamic empire. The real beginning of modernisation and secularisation was in this change" (Yavuz and Esposito 2003: 244). In 2011, an interesting paper by Ishtiaq Hussain, expert on counter-extremism, was published by *Faith Matters*, a non-profit organisation founded in 2005. The paper draws our attention to a different aspect of the Ottoman reform movements which, contrary to the mainstream discourse, argues that the Ottoman attempted to secularize their laws and state institutions. It also adds that the official rulers did not just implement a narrowly interpreted Sharia into the state's legal framework. However, the most remarkable claim the paper makes is that in 1858 homosexuality was decriminalised through this reforming period (Hussain 2011: 3). It would not be surprising, then, that new notions such as "freedom", "equality" and "citizenship" arose among various groups of communities through the Ottoman era. Naturally, these debates increased the tension between the Western-centred bureaucratic elites and other popular classes whose way of life was grounded on certain Islamic perspectives. While the former

stressed that Westernization, and so progress and enlightenment, are vital, the latter increasingly propagated specific Islamic precepts (Sirman 1989: 2).

The Ottomans finally realized the empire became just "a shrinking conglomeration of territories and conflicting ethnic-religious groups", and so felt the need for a thoroughly" new system of political beliefs and/or ideology" (Karpat 2002: 71). The system they sought for would appear as "nationalism", an ideology whose common goal, supposedly, would be "to transform society to an ideal future" (Çınar 2005: 7). The Young Ottomans, regarded as the first Ottoman nationalists belonging to the upper ranks of Ottoman society, "developed the concept of fatherland and political identity" to engage in a succesful modernization project (72). Alev Çınar, in *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time* (2005) offers a striking view on the linkage between nationalism and modernization. She indicates that, "the ideological bases for contending projects of modernization are invariably nationalist" (7). This sort of ideological basis, namely the nationalist basis, invents the "naming and making of bodies into racialized, gendered, or classed categories that the privileged position of the public is sustained and reproduced" (Çınar 2005: 38).

But then, where does "the woman question" reside within this complicated matrix of transformation and power? Disputes about the position of women were highlighted especially by the progressivists, namely the nationalist Young Ottomans. Nükhet Sirman, with reference to Deniz Kandiyoti, depicts this process as follows:

> The progressivists argued that the emancipation of women was a prerequisite of civilisation. Women as mothers and wives were responsible for the well-being of the Ottoman man and for the creation of future enlightened generations. To create responsible citizens, it was necessary first to educate and enlighten the women who were the mothers of the modern citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Women imprisoned in the shackles of tradition and superstition could not fulfil this role. (1989: 3)

Sirman in "The Making of Familial Citizenship in Turkey" (2005) implies that the quest for a transformed female image through the Ottoman period experienced a problematic clash with the notion of modernity. The rhetoric of modernization in a way emerged as a control mechanism through which "the male views of what reform and modernity should constitute" produced another version of hegemony (Sirman 2009: 154). It is noteworthy to end this part with Nira Yuval-Davis' viewpoint, who argues that, "the 'emancipation of women' has come to signify much wider political and social attitudes towards social

change and modernity in a variety of revolutionary and decolonization projects" (1997: 60). She points out that, "the position of women is central to the colonial gaze in defining indigenous cultures, it is there that symbolic declarations of cultural change have taken place. It has been one of the important mechanisms in which ethnic and national projects signified — inwardly and outwardly — their move towards modernization" (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, up until now, I have merely emphasized one side of the coin. Thus, with the already transforming milieu feminist voices begun to be heard by means of newspapers, journals, and women-based organizations. As Serpil Çakır reveals, "Women were not only granted rights from above but also actively fought for them" (2007: 62). Indeed, the feminist scholar Şirin Tekeli argues that Ottoman women had already started to question their socio-political position within society around the 1870s (2010: 119). Tekeli summarizes the women's movement of the Ottoman era as follows:

> They wrote books, published journals, formed associations, launched protest actions and engaged in heated debate with both the traditionalist and reformist men of the era. The most important issues for them were "polygamy" and "repudiation", rights given to men by sharia, the Islamic law. At the turn of the last century, the battle became more vigorous and women's experience in the Balkan Wars and the First World War politicised the movement. It was during the war years that women obtained some of the rights they had fought for: they were admitted to universities in 1914; they were allowed to work in factories and the public service in 1915; and in 1917, the "family act" recognised the right to limit polygamy to Muslim women, as well as women of other religions of the Empire. Though this act was never applied because of the war conditions, it was very important as it was the first step in the Islamic world. In 1919, suffrage became "the" issue on which women launched a campaign. (2010: 120)

Women took part in public debates and discussed their rights, and also the economic and political problems of the slowly disintegrating state (Tekeli 1991: 262). The early Republican feminist Nezihe Muhiddin in her book *Türk Kadını* (*The Turkish Woman*, 1931) informs that these exceptional women paved the way for future reforms.

Under these circumstances, the first women's journal, *Terakki-i Muhadderat* (Progress of Muslim Women, 1869-1870), was published in which women dealt with education, polygamy, religion and segregation. Other journals were included: *Vakit yahud Mürebbi-i Muhadderat* (Time or the Training of Muslim Women, 1875), *Ayna* (Mirror, 1875-1876), *Aile* (Family, 1880), *Insaniyet* (Humanity, 1883), and *Hanimlara Mahsus Gazete* (1895). Moreover, there were periodicals with titles like *Demet* (Bouquet, 1908) and *Mefharet* (Pride, 1908). In such a climate, many women came to support 'egalitarian'

ideas which they could express by means of these magazines, periodicals, and newspapers.

In this way women established associations and organizations such as the Woman's Department of Party Union and Progress, the Committee for Raising Women (Teal-i Nisvan Cemiyeti), and the Association of Progress-Minded Ottoman Women (Osmanlı Kadınları Terakkiperver Cemiyeti) (Berktay 1991). A Women's University (Inas Darülfünün) was established in 1914, with the support of the Ottoman Association for the Protection of Women's Rights (Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti). This organization was founded by the well-known novelist Halide Edip Adıvar. In 1920, the students of the Women's University "protested against gender discrimination and occupied the classes of male students as they demanded the abolishment of the Women's University and the right to attend classes with male students" (Tomaç 2011: 41).

These women got further with their demands with regard to egalitarianism and visibility within the social sphere. They did not hesitate to engage in harsh debates with traditional thinking men. Fatma Aliye and Emine Semiye, sisters and well-known Ottoman authors, openly fought against polygamy. These sisters were also known for their novels. Aliye is primarily known for being the first female novelist in Turkish literature. Amongst her novels are *Muhazarat* (*Useful Information*, 1892), *Hayal ve Hakikat* (*Dream and Truth*, 1894), and *Enin* (*Groaning*, 1910). Emine Semiye's best known novel is *Sefalet* (*Poverty*, 1908), while another entitled *Bîkes* (*Alone*, 1897) dwells on the contemporary phenomenon of arranged marriages. Through the novel the author deliberately emphasizes the female's choice in the marriage (Karaca 2013: 1492). In *Groaning*, Aliye discussed similar issues but was critical of arranged marriage and argued that women should have the freedom of choice. In addition, both authors explored the question of the visibility of women in the public sphere in their novels (1487). However, as Kandiyoti emphasizes in *Women, Islam and State* (1991), "in contrast to the feminist-nationalist stance of later periods, Islam was the only legitimate terrain in which issues relating to women could be debated" (26). As Aynur Demirdirek writes:

> Ottoman women's demands were parallel to the struggle for women's rights in the West. They followed women's movements around the world but underlined the fact that living in an Islamic society set different conditions for them. When they discussed their demands within the framework of Islam, they provided supportive examples from "*asrı saadet*", the "undistorted" days of Islam, but they refused to compromise. (1999: 79)

Besides these women's uprising, another important change came with the Second Constitutional period (1908-1919) which was ushered in by the Young Turk Revolution. The Committee for Union and Progress took power following the overthrow of the Sultan Abdulhamit II. This period was characterized by new freedoms after the absolutist rule of Abdulhamit, and as a result more women's voices began to be heard. However, after some time these voices had to succumb to the Young Turks' increasingly nationalistic project. The Ottoman empire abandoned "the project of sustaining the Empire, Ottoman-Turkish leaders geared efforts to constitute a nation-state in the model of Balkan and Arab nationalisms that had developed in their midst" (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 11). The nation-state project took an authoritarian turn in terms of women's rights. The reformers' views on modernity and reform became intertwined with their "male" perspectives towards the West and the Orient. As Meltem Ahıska argues, "in theorizing the construction and representation of Turkish modernity, we can neither unproblematically herald the Western model nor dismiss the fantasy of 'the West' that informs the hegemonic national imaginary" (2003: 353).

2.4. The Secular-Kemalist Feminist Path: Early Symptoms of "White Turk" Orientalism

> Throwing bombs at targeted living beings in a combat zone does not make you feel any pain. One only commits herself to the mission of destroying them.
>
> (Sabiha Gökçen, Tan June 15, 1937)

These words belong to the world's first female pilot and adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. His foremost feature is of being the leading character granting Turkish women their social and political rights with his highly enlightened and modernized comrades. Back to the quote above, Sabiha Gökçen is an iconic image that mirrors the emancipated Turkish women whose main objective was to break free from the binding ties of the past. Namely, the breaking free from the Ottoman-Islamic-backwards past, and adopting the secular-national Turkish-Western identity. Nevertheless, this is in reality a made-up cover story of the republican Turkish state, which imposes a state of amnesia on Turkish society which constantly implements a single grand narrative which Ilkkarcan summarizes as follows:

> The founding of the Turkish republic in 1923 was followed by the introduction of several reforms, including the abolition of *shari'a*, secularization of the state and revolutionary changes for women. In 1926, the introduction of the Turkish Civil Code, adapted from the Swiss Civil Code, banned polygamy and granted women equal rights in matters of divorce and child custody. The civil code in particular was an important victory over the advocates of *shari'a*. (2008: 43)

Nermin Abadan-Unat is one of those Kemalist feminists who cherished the privilege of benefiting from the republican revolution. At a symposium entitled "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk" (2011), Abadan-Unat critically responds to historians (e.g. Şükrü Hanioğlu) and social scientists who problematize the reforms of the Kemalist regime and Atatürk himself. For Kemalist feminists like her, thanks to Atatürk Turkish women's emancipation was a trailblazing historical event of the twentieth-century. Moreover, Atatürk was considered a prominent leader who fought against anti-imperialism and became a groundbreaking character for Europeans (2011).

At this juncture, it is necessary to delve into Sabiha Gökçen's story and expose the dark side of the institutional and legal reforms that aimed to build an egalitarian, secular, and modern society. According to official sources Gökçen was the daughter of a family living in Bursa, a city in Northwestern Anatolia. Upon losing her parents she was raised by her elder brother, during which time she met Atatürk. He adopted her and supported her to become a well-known Republican woman. She was expected to become a pilot to show the world how enlightened and emancipated Turkish women are. In 1937 she raged against a French delegate, fired her gun and told him that if it were a matter of necessity she was ready to fight (Hür 2013). The main episode that turned her into an icon of Turkish modernization and progressivism was the Dersim massacre which took place in Dersim province in Eastern Anatolia. As has been discussed, the Ottoman empire's millet system divided up populations in terms of their religious faith (Mardin 2006: 95). In the case of Dersim, the region was primarily inhabited by Alevis, a religious group in Shia Islam, and Kurds. On account of the authoritarian way in which Turkey's nationalistic new Resettlement Law of 1934 was being implemented, local ethnic minority groups started a rebellion. As a result, Atatürk appointed Gökçen as the chief individual to lead the Dersim massacre which, according to some historians, killed 40,000 people (McDowall 2007: 207-8).

The remarkable story of an iconic republican woman does not end here. In 2004 Hrant Dink, an Armenian-Turkish journalist, published new documentation to reveal Gökçen's real identity. He claimed that Gökçen was, in fact, an Armenian girl named Hatun Sebilciyan who was orphaned as a result of the genocide conducted in 1915. Raffi Bedrosyan in his article *Dersim: A First Step in Facing the Past in Turkey* in *The Armenian Weekly* (2011) draws our attention to a crucial part of the story:

> In stark contrast, the war hero and pilot Sabiha Gökçen was in fact an Armenian girl from Bursa, adopted by Atatürk after being orphaned during the genocide. We cannot help but wonder ironically: What did Sabiha Gökçen think when bombing the people below? That she was a Turk bombing the Kurds? Or did she know that she was an Armenian bombing Armenians?

A few years after his publication on Gökçen, Hrant Dink was assasinated by an ultra-nationalist in 2007.

This controversial portrayal presented above reveals an underlying fact about the Turkish project of modernization, westernization, and secularization. The secularist and nationalist standpoint of the newly proclaimed republic succumbed to a hegemonic positioning. This was a positioning of conducting certain reforms for the sake of control and subordination. As Kandiyoti puts it, "Feminism is not autonomous, but bound to the signifying network of the national context which produces it" (2004: 49). Thus, it would not be wrong to claim that the notion of egalitarianism was merely granted with the intention of severing linkages with the Ottoman Empire. Another intention was, then, to weaken the religious hegemony which overwhelmingly influenced the previous society (i.e Ottoman). Therefore, the regime's primary aim in terms of secularism (i.e. laicism) was to separate religion from political institutions. However, in pursuit of this vital goal, the Kemalist regime deployed a very paradoxical standpoint which can not be overlooked here. That is, at the core of the Kemalist secularization and modernization project lies positivism, which means positivistic science became a priority to achieve human progress and it was assumed (incorrectly) that religion was inherently at odds with this.

Nevertheless, the six principles (i.e. nationalism, republicanism, statism, populism, revolutionarism, and secularism) of the Kemalist ideology, represented in the six arrows of the Republican People's Party (RPP) emblem, have been eloborated in-depth by scholars who, in fact, criticized the ideology for embracing a highly elitist, centralist, and positivist ideology that perceived people as objects of the Westernizing

state (Parla 1991; Robin 1996; Zürcher 1998; Özyürek 2006). An example which supports this is the skull measurement study requested by Atatürk and conducted by one of the first idealized Republican woman, Âfet İnan. Accordingly, Esra Özyürk writes:

> A few Turkish anthropologists, including Atatürk's surrogate daughter Âfet İnan, traveled in Anatolia taking skull measurements in order to prove that the Turkish "race" was the ancestor of all civilizations. Following Atatürk's orders in 1937, İnan conducted the most extensive anthropolometric survey to date and took skull measurements of 64,000 people in Anatolia and Thrace (Aydın 2001). Her aim was to contest the allegations that Turks belonged to the "secondary yellow race" and show that instead they formed part of the white European homo alpinus race, and also that Turks consisted of a homogenous race. In her research, she defined the characteristics of the Turkish race with fair skin, a straight nose, and blue or green eyes. (2006: 112-13)

Surely, to support scientific research was to lead a path to contemporary civilization, namely the Western civilization, which was for the benefit of the nation (Parla and Davidson 2004: 104). As Parla and Davidson emphasize, "the Kemalist regime did not entirely separate religious institutions, personnel, or practices from the state" (Ibid.). Instead, "the regime maintained integrated, institutional relations of interpretation, subordination, and control over Islam through the Directorate of Religious Affairs" (Ibid.). In a visible way, the official stance of the new republic both on the status of women and religion was questionable.

Women's status, for instance, was thoroughly limited to a secular stance that limited itself almost entirely to pure 'symbolism'. That is, this standpoint merely "intended to reform the Islamic way of life, rather than to promote the actual liberation of women in everyday life. Thus, women were presented as the 'emblem' of secularism and the new 'Republic'" (Ilkkarcan 2008: 44). As a consequence, Metin Yüksel likewise notes that, "the importance of the fact that modernization and/or westernization has been a 'project' rather than a 'process' becomes perhaps most visible when one looks at the changes brought about by the Kemalist Revolution in 1923" (2006: 777).

Irvin Cemil Schick in *Representing Middle Eastern Women: Feminism and Colonial Discourse* (1990) elaborates on the symbolism of women as follows:

> A photograph of an unveiled woman was not much different from one of a tractor, an industrial complex, or a new railroad; it still merely symbolised yet another one of men's achievements. Once again reduced to mere objects, women were, in these images, at the service of a political discourse conducted by men and for men. (369)

Women were doubly burdened in Turkey. Self-sacrificing for the sake of the nation was not enough, women had to be visible in pictures and certain public spheres.

The nationalist propaganda implicitly and explicitly cast the veil as an image of backwardness, passivity, and the Oriental. This, however, has exposed the undertones of a reverse Orientalist tendency. Likewise, the Egyptian feminist scholar Leila Ahmed has written:

> Veiling – to the Western eye, the most visible marker of the differentness and inferiority of Islamic societies – became the symbol now of both the oppression of women (or, in the language of the day, Islam's degradation of women) and the backwardness of Islam, and it became the open target of colonial attack and the spearhead of the assault on Muslim societies. (1992: 152)

The Turkish version of the Orientalist tendency instead includes a two-fold perception. Firstly, it aims to reverse Orientalist depictions of passive and veiled women. Therefore, the "nationalist propaganda began portraying women unveiled, participating in athletic competitions, making public speeches, and handling sophisticated technology" (Kandiyoti 2004: 48). Secondly, another perception that lies beneath this tendency is the adoption of Western cultural hegemony and implementing another form of Orientalism on individuals. As a matter of fact, such a project re-invents a dichotomy that probably signals already existing or upcoming discriminatory reactions directed at specific social groups.

In fact, the regime did not ban veiling officially. Rather, "it introduced and encouraged the European way of clothing for both men and women, aiming to replace traditional garments such as the *fez* and *niqab* with hats and other European clothing" (Tomaç 2011: 45). A civilized life style, for instance, entails attending Western-style balls, tea parties, and theatre shows which women and men were expected to attend together. On this Meyda Yeğenoğlu in *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (1998) quotes a public speech by Atatürk:

> Gentlemen, the Turkish people who founded the Turkish Republic are civilized; they are civilized in history and in reality. But I tell you as your own brother, as your friend, as your father, that the people of the Turkish Republic, who claim to be civilized, must show and prove that they are civilized, by their ideas and their mentality, by their family life and their way of living… My friends, international dress is worthy and appropriate for our nation, and we will wear it. (133)

The dress code, or rather the *hat code*, became law in 1925 and resulted in severe conflicts within Turkish society. While women were implicitly obliged to unveil, men were forced to wear the European-style fedora. Nevertheless, not every individual had the ultimate desire to resemble a European, and revolts were started against the code in several Anatolian towns. Sadly, while many rebels were silenced by force, many others were executed (Bahadıroğlu 2010). In a visible way, the Kemalist regime was building a *social imaginary* that adopted internal Orientalism.

Today, many question Kemalism's democratic and egalitarian basis in terms of its "secularism" (Parla and Davidson 2004: 6). Its policies towards women were plausible and viable only for a minority cadre of elites. While those policies were cherished by these upper-classes, it was oppression for others. The Kemalist project of elimination and suppression of Kurdish and other minority communities shed light upon its oppressive and narrow policies. The most important feature of the Kemalist modernization package is the fact that it aimed, "to create an ethnically, linguistically, and culturally homogeneous nation and nation-state out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, which was a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi- cultural entity" (Yüksel 2006: 777). The marginalization of these minority identities are concomitant with the so-called egalitarian policies towards Turkish women. This sort of combination displays another problematic dimension of the Republican regime. According to Yüksel, this vicious circle propagated "doubly marginalized" female images (Ibid.). Kurdish women are the clearest example, being "doubly marginalized" by the state's modernization project "because on the one hand their ethnic identity was severely crushed and on the other hand they became relatively disadvantaged and underprivileged compared to their Turkish counterparts who were potentially able to benefit from the secularizing and modernizing Republican reform" (Ibid.).

In this way the intellectual, political, and sociological basis of the Kemalist ideology and its state-feminism package has engendered "self-colonization" (Aktay 2005: 65). That is, the secularization and modernization project was based on a "synthesis between East and West", which "was in fact a 'self-colonial' movement towards Western ideologies and cultural models" (Alver 2013: 417). While Turkey has never been a colony of the Western imperial powers, it has nevertheless adopted a self-propagated socio-political power structure based on Western hegemony which has produced a social

imaginary, "through which those in power consume and reproduce the projection of 'the West' to negotiate and consolidate their hegemony in line with their pragmatic interests... [This sort of]hegemony operates by employing the mechanisms of projection that support the fantasy of 'the West'" (Ahıska 2003: 366). Postcolonial scholar Partha Chatterjee in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (1986) argues that "Eastern" nationalisms have confirmed and maintained the Oriental legacy with the adoption of the notion of "modernity" which is the chief principle of colonial dominance (30). Furthermore, for anthropologists like Carol Appadurai Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, nationalism is "the avatar of Orientalism" (1993: 12). In this sense, "when nationalist elites project the internalised Orientalism 'inwards' as part of the nation-building process, the 'native' emerges as an Other that becomes the target of 'corrective' and 'scientific' projects of modernity and progress" (Zeydanlıoğlu 2008: 3).

As a consequence, the Turkish republic and the republican state feminist discourse of the time mirror an authoritarian and militant secularization process. Instead of adopting pluralist, democratic, and liberal policies, Kemalism chose to implement and reinforce statism. According to Parla and Davidson, the Kemalist ideology and its socio-political instruments like "the woman question" exhibit serious problems with what they call "conceptual imprecision" (2004: 9):

> Kemalism is not nonideological, liberal, socialist, and democratic, nor is it philosophically universalist, and its perceived commitment to rationalism and pragmatism needs to be reevaluated. Kemalism is, rather, a specific variant of rightist, corporatist ideology committed to a view of society, reason, and action that bears only slight resemblance to its rationalist and pragmatic reputation. (9)

In that sense, Kemalism's modernization project deployed the westernized and secularized female image for pragmatic reasons. Women had to be the agents of modernization and bearers of development because these were their duties to the nation.

I aim to close this part by referring to two prominent feminists of the Republican period who are vital to uncovering the patriarchal and hegemonic basis of the reforms. Halide Edib Adıvar is one of the controversial feminist figures of the era. She was born in 1882 in Istanbul during the Late Ottoman era. Edib's educational career took place in Uskudar American College from where she graduated in 1901. Right after her graduation Edib started writing as an intellectual in newspapers, and as a feminist scholar she actively took part in feminist associations. Edib also wrote many novels such as *The Clown and*

His Daughter (1935) and *The Shirt of Flame* (1924). The latter came to be known as her magnum opus on account of being an "epic recital of the Sakarya Victory" (Görgün-Baran 2008: 136). As Erdağ Göknar argues, it is a significant novel for manifesting an emerging Turkish secular masterplot (2013: 35). The collective voice in this novel, the secular masterplot, is depicted by Göknar as follows:

> The secular masterplot, as it developed in literary and historical texts throughout the monoparty era of the Republican People's Party (1923-50), consists of four main historical dramas that emerge as literary tropes: **1)** Colonial Encounter (Istanbul and Anatolia under Allied occupation); **2)** Anatolian Turn (a populist movement toward the Anatolian people); **3)** Imagined Turkishness (national self-determination and identity construction); and **4)** Cultural Revolution (secular conversion). In their representations of women, both *The Shirt of Flame* and *The Turkish Ordeal* contribute to the establishment, as well as to the subversion, of the secular masterplot by documenting early inscriptions of feminist resistance. (36)

Not surprisingly, Edib is known for taking an active role in Turkey's War of Independence and was highly inspired by the Turkish ideology. While today Edib is praised for being an exemplary Republican feminist and literary figure, many scholars miss the part of her self-imposed exile in Britian. After the advent of the republic, Edib felt dissapointment by the new Kemalist regime and left Turkey for a self-imposed exile (Nas 2013: 187). She only returned from her exile following Atatürk's death in 1938.

During her stay in Britian she frequently visited India and got the chance to closely analyze Gandhi's resistance against colonial powers. Throughout this period Edib wrote remarkable books such as *Turkey Faces West* (1935), *Inside India* (1937), and *Conflict of East and West in Turkey* (1930). Interestingly, in these books we see that Edib's experience in India influenced her perspective on Turkey's anti-colonial resistance, comparing Turkey's resistance with that of Gandhi in India. The outcome of this comparison can be perceived from the books she wrote in exile. For instance, she writes with reference to Atatürk in *Turkey Faces West* (1930), "The Turkish dictatorship has made the next greatest effort after the Soviets to cut its people off from their past" (1930: 258). She argues that, "[the Turkish independence] struggle led by Mustafa Kemal produced a regime with systemic totalitarianism" (quoted in Nas 2013: 191). Moreover, after her encounter with Gandhi she noticed that he had a very distinctive perception about anti-colonial resistance when compared to Atatürk, observing that, "Gandhi's operation within that material domain is a unique approach. Gandhi not only operates within the domain of the spiritual in his revolutionary ideals, but also within materiality, to the extent

that it becomes useful in encountering Western domination and power" (Nas 2013: 190). At the time, most of Edib's accounts which she wrote during her stay in India were ignored. Historian Mushirul Hasan hints at the most likely reason for this in the preface of *Inside India* (2002): "Presumably, the reflections of Halide Edib are ignored simply because she asks disturbing questions – questions that do not fit into established historical canons" (ix).

Another early republican feminist figure is Nezihe Muhiddin, who was only discovered after the 1980s. Muhiddin is one of those prominent figures of the women's movement who also published a journal called *Kadın Yolu (Women's Way)* at the time. Right after the foundation of the Republic, Muhiddin and her friends demanded that they be allowed to establish a political party called Kadınlar Halk Fırkası (The Women's People's Party) on 15 June 1923. What is most striking here is that these women had already founded a party months before Atatürk's People's Republican Party. Nevertheless, their party was banned, and they were advised to found an association instead. Thus they founded the Turkish Women's Union, "a non-governmental association under Muhiddin's leadership" to hold campaigns for rights of suffrage (Knaus 2007: 6). However, the Women's Union "was successfully pressured to terminate its existence by the Single-Party regime", Atatürk's CHP (Çakır 2007: 65). The underlying goal of the termination was to silence these very few feminist activists. The sad part of the story starts in August 1927 when "the regional governor issued a search order against the Women's Union, with the charge of corruption against its leader" (Knaus 2007: 6). Right after this event Muhiddin experienced several disturbing incidents, standing trial for "violating the law of associations" (Ibid.).

Only in 1934 were women granted the suffrage, and in the parliament it was believed that this was another democratizing step to modernization (Ibid.). Ironically, Turkey could not be democratic as it was still a single-party state at the time, and held a questionable stance by banning a political women party. During this period Muhiddin was slowly silenced and ended up being excluded from the parliament. Though Muhiddin was a highly influential figure in the fight for suffrage, "[she] was to remain largely absent from official history books" (Ibid.). Unfortunately, the most disturbing part of the story has now been revealed in a recent article by the columnist Yıldıray Oğur (*Türkiye* March 30, 2014). When Muhiddin realized she had lost the fight against the authoritarian

Kemalist regime, she left the political scene. However, her activism continued through her supposedly secluded life. She started meeting with women at tea parties she arranged at her house. At the same time she was teaching at a high school and wrote popular fiction to earn money. However, Muhiddin, the powerful feminist activist, could not endure being forgotten and isolation. In the end, her friends had to put her in a mental institution where she died on 10 February 1958 as a lonely and forgotten women. No one attended her funeral except for her husband and close friends. The fate of the Turkish Women's Union (TWU) was not that different from hers:

> In 1935, the Turkish Woman's Union (TWU), which played the role of a bridge between the Ottoman women's movement and republican women, was invited to shut down. Ankara claimed that as women had "full equal status with men", there was no need for a women's organisation such as TWU. That was the end of the women's movement for 40 years to come. (Tekeli 2006: 120)

As a result, Turkish women were to accept an 'equality' myth propagated by the Republican cadre. Therefore, neither grassroot feminism nor the presence of any women's organisation were given the opportunity to actively take place in the newly founded Turkish nation-state. Thus, with the closure of the Turkish Women's Union, first wave feminism ended in Turkey and women's political silence would last until the 1980s. This period would be related to the emergence and rise of second wave feminism in Turkey.

2.5. The Neo-Kemalist and Liberal Bourgeois Feminist Paradigm: A Self-Colonization of the "White Turk" Secular Feminist

It was only after the 1980s when women started to scrutinize and contest the prevailing structures of power in Turkey. As Çağla Dinçer and Şule Toktaş write:

> The second wave of feminism in Turkey was a latecomer when compared with its counterpart in the West. Instead of the 1960s, the 1980s in Turkey were the years during which the feminist movement brought up issues common to second wave feminism in the West, such as the elimination of violence against women, bringing to light the oppression that women experienced in the family, the use of sexuality as a medium for male dominance, the misrepresentation of women in the media and the challenge against virginity tests — a common practice for women who are about to get married or who have been subject to sexual assault. (2010: 41)

However, the tension between liberalism and individualism on the one hand and collectivism with statism on the other was critically increasing. The genesis of this tension dates back to the sixties and seventies with the emergence of the Marxist/socialist

paradigms. A wide range of student movements took place and youth politics was dominated by various brands of the Marxist left (Sirman 1989: 6). It was through this period that Turkish women began to be drawn into a different discursive zone than that of the female image they had had imposed on them by the secularization and modernization package of authoritarian republican ideology. Still, the truth cannot be overlooked that it was the state ideology that provided — and, paradoxically, suppressed — the circumstances for women's social and political activities. A new feminist discourse had to take the stage and act in a different epistemological zone than the state feminist paradigm, as the humanitarian and egalitarian discourse leftist ideologies manifested offered women a place in the fight against class domination (Ibid.). Therefore, this became an era in which the state's competence to "maintain a monolithic ideology and monopoly over political mobilization was seriously shaken and eclipsed by the emergence of new and ideologically distinct opposition groups" (Z. Arat 1998: 17). Nonetheless, this fight based on leftist views was fundamentally against the class system which subordinated other ideologies to the main goal, such as the women's rights (Sirman 1989: 6).

Şirin Tekeli argues that though those political mobilizations engendered a serious threat to the decades-long ideologies of the state, their attitude towards women was problematic (1986: 195). While describing the organisations at the time, she reveals that the female image portrayed there was self-sacrificing wives-mothers-sisters (Ibid.). Moreover, while these two decades were marked with such nourishing steps towards individualism and liberalism, they also correspond "to a period that started and ended with millitary interventions (1960 and 1980, respectively), with another in between (1971)" (Ertürk 2006: 90). Beyond all these millitary interventions and the aforementioned female image of the political movements, women at least had experienced mobilization against the state.

This period also saw the emergence of religiously oriented political parties, and from 1969 onward these parties began to compete in national elections (Heper 2009: 415). During this period a new movement had already appeared, the Islamic Revival or Islamic Awakening (al-Sahwa al-Islamiya). According to Saba Mahmood, Islamic Revival "is a term that refers not only to the activities of state-oriented political groups but more broadly to a religious ethos or sensibility that has developed within contemporary Muslim

societies" (2005: 3). During this period Turkish secularism came to be haunted by certain religious forces such as the "Nakşibendi Sufi order" and the Nurcu sect (Mardin 2006: 244). All these developments were regarded as a threat to the thesis of modernization and secularization. Moreover, as Feyzi Baban states, "[movements like] political Islam have presented the most important challenges to the boundaries of universal citizenship, and its homogeneous representation of national identity" (2004: 6). In fact, certain secular and Islam-based writers and intellectuals gradually initiated debates on the sensitive issue of the Kemalist modernization project. Şerif Mardin asserted that, "the superficiality and lack of organic linkages with the society of Kemalism" has led other dynamics like Islam to function as a supplementary dynamic filling the vacuum (1989: 170).

However, all those political mobilizations, the questioning and challenging of power structures and militant secularism ultimately brought about a military coup in 1980. Toktaş and Diner summarize this period as follows:

> All the political parties were closed down except those few which were newly founded and strictly controlled by the military; many of the leaders of the political parties, labour unions and political organizations were banned from politics; the youth and women's branches of banned political parties were also ruled to be illegal; and a new constitution was enacted in 1982 that outlined a very limited framework for individual rights and freedoms. The ideological confrontation between leftist and right-wing groups that had led to the political instability as well as violence of the 1970s served as the major reasoning for the military's intervention in politics and hence brought about a depoliticized environment in the 1980s. (2010: 45)

Yet a powerful dynamic was to appear in post-80s Turkey, namely, the second wave feminist paradigm. The second wave Turkish feminist framework does not correspond to its Western counterparts of the 1960s and 1970s. Though the state had deployed "legal and political barriers to political expression and participatory civil society", feminists were preparing for campaigns and protests. It is significant to state that this was the first time that feminists were claiming their own space independently. However, Şirin Tekeli, who is essentially identified as the pioneer feminist to introduce the word "feminism" into Turkish, would disagree with this identification and would underline the following, "Oh, no, I wouldn't have dared in 1982. We got Giselle Halimi, a French-Tunisian feminist to do it for us" (Grünell and Voeten 1997: 219).

Despite socio-polital obstacles, feminists started to take action like organizing a rally in May 1987 that, "protested the pervasive practice of domestic violence as well as

the state's lack of attention to the issue" (Arat 1998: 120). They brought up issues such as "the oppression that women experienced in the family" and "the use of sexuality as a medium for male dominance" (Diner and Toktaş 2010: 41). The catchphrase 'personal is political' of the Western second wavers was adopted and recalled. Several feminist magazines started publication and brought up discussions on "women's rights and the role of the state in supporting the patriarchal system" (Ilkkarcan 1997: 8). While fighting for political and social equality through several demonstrations and campaigns, these feminists also succeeded in the cancellation of certain laws that were discriminating against women (Ibid.). In 1990 the Purple Roof was founded as a consultancy centre which also functioned as a shelter for battered women. Another significant establishment is KA-DER. The organization's goal "is to increase women's political participation and representation as well as to lobby for laws and regulations to bring quotas to forcefully increase the number of women in decision-making positions" (Diner and Toktaş 2010: 46). The organization was founded in 1997 which is a very late date for a country like Turkey that for a long time has granted women so-called political rights.

While the post-80s period saw the rising of identity politics movements such as political Islam and the second wave feminist framework, it also witnessed the emergence of Islamist women. Islamist women's most controversial characteristic was, of course, their veiling which was an apparent challenge to the social imaginary of the secular nation-state. Accordingly, many scholars have attempted to present possible definitions about such appeals to Islam. It could have been the consequence of mass mobilizations (Toprak 1991), or a natural result of excessive state control (Sunar and Toprak 1983). In fact, for Arat,"it is in all of these sociopolitical and economic forces that the appeal of Islam has increased in Turkey and women began covering their heads" (1998: 123). However, wearing a headscarf in public institutions was still a prevailing taboo. Though the veil was never really prohibited, "dress codes of public institutions make it illegal to cover hair in public service. Head scarves, within the Republican Turkish context, stand for and propagate a religious ideology perceived to be inimical to the secular foundations of the Republic by the ruling elite" (123-4). It was the Islamic-based Welfare Party, founded in 1983, which initiated this mobilization of Islamic women. The party encouraged these women to help them mobilize the votes. In return, the party promised them what the secular dictates took from them, namely, their Islamic identity (i.e. the

veil). These Islamist women reflected a very distinctive attitude when compared to mainstream Turkish feminism:

> Welfare Party activists go from door to door in areas inhabited by migrants distributing food, offering health services and social support. They invite and welcome the women to their local organization, thus also providing them with the opportunity for political participation. Contrary to the women activists of the feminist movement, the activists of the Welfare Party have developed strategies to analyse and respond to the needs of women of lower socioeconomic and educational levels. They not only respond to their material needs, such as food, health or child care, but also to non-material needs such as belonging to a group, self-identity, empowerment and political participation. (Ilkkarcan 1997: 10-1)

Unfortunately, the revival of Islam and the Islamist women's increasing visibility in the secular public sphere caused conflict and splits in the society. The Islamist revolution of Khomeini in Iran in 1979 and the corresponding Islamist movement in Turkey invented a mythical fear for the secular Turkish community. The rhetoric "Will Turkey be Iran?" was covered very often by the media, especially when the Islam-based political parties succeeded in forming a majority in the government. Even today this rhetoric is embraced by, especially, secular feminists whose voices to some extent represent the common sense in Turkey (Tomaç 2011: 65).

Another threatening movement that erupted during this period is Kurdish nationalism. Both political Islam and Kurdish nationalism were challenges to the exclusionary structure of Turkish national identity: "Kurdish nationalism poses a serious challenge to the privileged position of Turkish identity. Political Islam represents another challenge to secular citizenship" (Baban 2004: 7). The rise of Kurdish nationalism ended up with an increasingly militaristic response by the Turkish state. This resulted in a civil war with catastrophic and traumatic consequences, specifically in Turkey's Southeast. Welat Zeyndalioğlu partially covers the devastating results of the civil war as follows:

> During the civil war the Kurdish provinces were transformed into a militarised zone by the Turkish army. In collaboration with paramilitary and extremist groups and intelligence organs, Special Forces (Özel Timler) murdered thousands of Kurdish intellectuals, human rights activists, politicians and terrorised the population at large (McDowall 2000: 441). Similar to the resettlement programmes of the early decades of the republic, the 1990s saw mass-scale village evacuations where Kurdish peasants were exposed to "degrading behaviour, arbitrary arrest, violence, torture, extra-judicial killings, sexual violence or threats of violence and the wanton destruction (or plunder) of moveable property, livestock and food stocks" (McDowall 2000: 440). (2008:12)

Zeydanlıoğlu in ""The White Turkish Man's Burden": Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds in Turkey" (2008) connects this to the following ideology:

> In the name of what the Kemalists called, "reaching the contemporary level of civilisation" (*muassır medeniyet seviyesine erismek*), this project was carried out through the agent of the nation-state with speed and from above, eliminating the opportunity to seek change in any way other than through mimicking "the West". In this sense, the essentialisation and homogenisation of "the West" normalised the unequal power relations within Turkey, reflecting the pragmatic interests, expectations and the dominance of the secular Westernised elite, giving way to a "cognitive dissonance" between the value system of the elites and the rest of the population (Göle 1997: 86). The civilisational divide between the modernising urban elite and the subaltern rural population assigned a paternal role to the Kemalists, who constantly perceived the Anatolian masses as backward, primitive and infantilised Others. (2008: 4-5)

In an visible way we realize that the intertwining of the Islamist women and the Kurdish movement is a result of the hard-line, suppressive, and discriminatory secularization and modernization process of Turkey.

Under these cirscumstances, the social imaginary and power structures residing within it succumbed to a thickening of borders between secular feminists, Islamist women, and the Kurdish minority. High rates of urban-rural mobilizations started to change the secular, modern, and national sight of the urban sites. Furthermore, the post-coup era "formed the basis of neo-liberalist policies proposed by the IMF and capitalist forces" (Ilkarcan 1997:7). These policies were also influential in changing the class and power structures which "led to the development of a consumer culture and great emphasis placed by the new middle class on lifestyle" (Arat-Koç 2007: 43). Sedef Arat-Koç problematizes this "unchallenged and unquestioned common sense status of neo-liberalism" and relates it to the devastating attempts to terminate the political left (2007: 42). According to Arat-Koç, the national (i.e. internal) developments in Turkey and the changes in geopolitics globally which occured after the Cold War invented a new paradigm of the "self" and "other" (43). While, previously Communism was seen as the main threat to the Turkish state and so to national identity, "now 'culture' became the basis on which notions of 'self' and 'other' were defined. Kurds and 'Islamists', variously challenging the homogenous conception of modern Turkish identity, were now declared the new enemies" (Ibid.). As a consequence, "the new Turk" emerged, who also can be called the "white Turk".

Who are these "white Turks" and what sort of connection do they have to the Turkish feminist paradigm? Arat-Koç defines them as follows:

> Through the 1980s and 1990s, the Turkish media experienced rapid corporatization. This allowed the emergence of an extremely well-paid media elite who started to construct notions of "the new Turk." Some well-known columnists in the major newspapers began to articulate increasingly aggressive anti-migrant discourses for the urban middle classes "scandalized" by the "contamination" of their "white," modern Turkey by people from other cultures. The migrants started to be seen as "*kara kalabalıklar*" ("the dark crowds" or "the dark masses"), as hordes "invading," rather than assimilating to, the "civilized" spaces of a "world-class" city such as Istanbul (Ayata 2002; Bali 2000; 2002; Işık and Pınarcıoğlu 2001; Kurtuluş 2003; Öncü 2000). (2007: 44).

This has been a process through which self-colonization of secular Turks becomes excessively apparent, and identities that do not fit in the "white Turk" paradigm are considered threatening. The "white Turk" discourse conceives of Islamism and the Kurdish or other private/minority identities as opposed to the secular-modern Turk.

> In embracing laicism/secularism, "white Turk" discourse encodes it with symbols of lifestyle. "Islamism," in this framework, becomes despised not so much for its potential undemocratic political implications, but rather because it is seen as damaging for Turkey's "Western" image. As a defense against perceived threats to national (and civilizational) identity from Kurds and "Islamists," it has become very popular since the late 1980s to display numerous photographs of Atatürk. (Arat-Koç 2007: 48)

Such photographs of Atatürk still have been utilized during demonstrations, rallies, and in certain public institutions to assertively indicate the secular as opposed to the Other. Another reason is to express an admiration for Atatürk's "Western" complexion such as his blond hair, blue eyes, and his precisely Western attire. The "white Turk" discourse engages in a collaboration of nationalism and transnationalism by asserting its national identity and embracing Western identity through neoliberalism and globalization (Arat-Koç 2007: 47). In this sense, as historian Ussama Makdissi writes in his work entitled *Ottoman Orientalism* (2002), "In an age of Western-dominated modernity, every nation creates its own Orient" (768).

Correspondingly, the Turkish feminist paradigm has been greatly influenced by this discourse of "whiteness". Arat-Koç argues that this ideology hampers these feminists "[from] reach[ing] across class, ethnicity, and regional and rural/urban differences, and [from] represent[ing] the different voices and interests of women differently and unequally situated in Turkish society... [It affects] the capacity of Turkish feminists to engage in egalitarian, mutual, and inclusive transnational relationships with women's and feminist groups in the Middle East" (2007: 49). These mainstream feminist discourses have obtained hegemonic positions, subalternizing meta-narratives derived from Western paradigms. Their "transnationalism" is merely transnationalism towards the West, and

loosing ties with the Middle East. Their standpoint has re-invented a different form of orientalism, namely self-colonization, which has negatively affected the socio-political role of the feminist identity.

A definition seems necessary to perceive the critical dimensions of these so-called "transnational" feminist discourses. Firstly, the liberal bourgeois feminist approach emphasizes "sexual freedom, personal autonomy, consumption, life-style, self-help for empowerment" (Arat-Koç 2007: 49). This type of Turkish 'transnational' feminism firmly employs the rhetoric of secularization and modernization. They can be seen through the members of the Association for Support and Education of Female Candidates (Ka-Der) founded in 1997. Ka-Der defends equal representation of women and men in politics. They claim that equal representation is essentially neccesary to reach democracy. The organisation's main goal is to increase the number of women in politics. Nevertheless, their calls for solidarity and gender equality are severely criticized for their explicit class discrimination. İlkay Meriç in "Bourgeois Feminism Again on Stage" (2007) argues that Ka-Der is exclusively focused on the representation of women in the parliament. However, inequalities and power structures cannot be solved by equal representation in parliament alone. Meriç continues by asking why these so-called activist feminist never question the oppression of working class women, minority women like Kurds, and the veiling issue. She ends up by claiming that this bourgeois feminist framework merely nourishes capitalism, neo-liberal power structures, and hegemonic meta-narratives. Contrary to Meriç's argument, Arat-Koç defines liberal bourgeois feminism as being less "interested in activism and in feminism as a collective project" (2007: 50). Nevertheless, they are on the same page in criticizing the neo-liberalist tendencies of these feminists. Both of them also problematize the ignorance towards the suppression of working class women including minorities and veiled women.

There is also neo-Kemalist feminism which argues for "the need to embrace a secular conception of Turkey and to defend Kemalist reforms for women—which were mostly about women's place in the public sphere" (2007: 49). It would be wrong to state that the neo-Kemalist feminist paradigm thoroughly adopts neo-liberal values. However, they excessively "adopt Orientalism and culturalism in making sense of women's issues in Turkey... [These] feminists are — continuing the Kemalist tradition — interested in feminist activism as a civilizing mission" (2007: 49-50). Nermin Abadan Unat, author of

Women in Turkish Society (1981), and the pioneers of the Association for the Support of Contemporary Living established in 1989 (ÇYDD) such as Türkan Saylan, once the president of the association, are representatives of the neo-Kemalist feminism. Turkish scholar and PEN honorary member Ismail Beşikçi condemns these women activists and such organizations for representing the state's anti-democratic, racist, and anti-Kurd policies. In an article Beşikçi explains that activists like Saylan work hard to assimilate Kurdish girls into Turkish culture. Saylan and her activist friends have founded several primary boarding schools to take young Kurdish girls from their families, thus from their mother from whom they will learn the "mother" language and culture (*Kim Soran* 2008). The cover story is simple: "In Eastern regions girls are not sent to school; however, we are volunteering to save them from the patriarchy they are exposed to" (Ibid.).

Though both these feminist paradigms haves different areas of interest, their perception about identities that do not fit into the secular and modern "female image" are the same. Both feminisms tend to see the veil and various forms of covering as representing a threatening form of Sharia. And this way of attire is conceived as a threat to Turkey's secular and modern face. Moreover, "they have shown full support for Turkish state policies that exclude women in such attire from public spaces such as schools, universities, public offices and even courtrooms" (Arat-Koç 2007: 50). Nilüfer Göle recalls a significant event as follows:

> For the first time in its Republican history, Turkey witnessed the election of a "covered" Muslim woman, an Istanbul deputy from the pro-Islamic party (Fazilet Partisi) during the last general elections (18 April 1999). But it was Merve Kavakçı's physical presentation in the Parliament, not her election, that provoked a public dispute, a blowup. On the very day of its opening on 2 May 1999, when Kavakçı, a thirty-one-year-old woman wearing a white headscarf with fashionable frameless eyeglasses and a long-skirted, modern two-piece suit, walked (over-)confidently into the meeting hall of the National Assembly for the opening session of the new Parliament. The men and women deputies stood up and protested against Kavakçı's presence with such vehemence—especially twelve women from the Democratic Left Party (DSP)—shouting "Merve out, ayatollahs to Iran," "Turkey is secular, will remain secular," that she was obliged to leave the Parliament without taking the oath. Kavakçı's Islamic covering challenged the unwritten laws of the Parliament and enraged the deputies as well as (secular) public opinion. (2002: 178)

Kavakçı was accused of being a traitor and working for foreign Middle Eastern powers like Iran. Nevertheless, she had a remarkable biography: she had studied computer engineering at the University of Texas, spoke fluent English, and "had symbolic distinction in a non-Western context" with her fashionable attire (2002: 180). However,

none of these features earned her respect. She was scolded by the prime minister, Bülent Ecevit, “Please bring this lady into line!”, and left the parliament.

Another noteworthy characteristic of the “white Turk” feminist framework is that they “share an urban middle-class feminism that is much less critical of men and the patriarchal practices of their own class/culture than of those of the ‘other Turkey’”(Arat-Koç 2007: 50). For example, in recent years there has been an enormous amount of attention paid to “honor killings”. Instead of analyzing other reasons that equally trigger the oppression and objectification of Kurdish women, they simply attribute these women’s subjugation to the “tradition and/or ethnicity—a product of Kurdish and/or ‘feudal culture’ in southeastern Turkey” (Ibid.). Metin Yüksel adds a different aspect to this discussion by arguing that while Turkish feminists have been criticizing Kemalism, “they have implicitly and/or explicitly, intentionally and/or unintentionally followed Kemalist nationalist lines” (2006: 784). He claims that “this can be seen in the relatively radical and autonomous feminist movement which emerged in Turkey in the 1980s and flourished in the 1990s” (Ibid.). He criticizes the Turkish feminist framework in general for failing to see the Kurdishness of Kurdish women and, instead, putting the stress on Kurdish women’s female identity (Ibid.). He refers to prominent Turkish feminist scholar Yeşim Arat who argues that women’s activism within the Turkish feminist framework is basically “issue-oriented and universalist in its discourse” (785).

Contrary to this portrayal of the ‘universalistic’ Turkish feminism, Arat with reference to an interview with the editor of Kurdish feminists’ journal *Rosa* implies that Kurdish feminist discourse is “a particularistic phenomenon” and asserts “that within the Kurdish nationalist movement, women had to become like men to be taken seriously, which as feminists, was not what they wanted” (Ibid.). Yüksel thus reveals that the argument does not appear to suggest the big picture and asks how far it is possible “to argue that someone, even if a feminist, could ever ignore his/her national identity?” (Ibid.). He argues that there is “a prevailing consciousness that some feminism is the ‘feminism of the majority’, whereas some feminism is the 'feminism of other minority groups', including the Kurds, then there should be some sort of national identity of Turkish women, which they have not been able to ignore” (Ibid.). Thus, he finds it essential to ask how far it is tenable “to attribute the question of ethnic/national belonging to the women of 'other minority groups' but not to the Turkish women? (Ibid.). Yüksel

claims that, in this sense, the problem is that Turkish women see themselves as the feminists of the majority, then in fact, Turkish women should "problematize their relationship with their national identity more than the women of 'other minority groups', including the Kurds, primarily because they are nationally in a dominant position" (Ibid.). However, he uncovers the fact that the implicit assumption in the argument of Yeşim Arat is "that the issue of national belonging is relevant only for the Kurdish women but not for the Turkish women, and thus there is the attribution of the 'universalistic' position to Turkish women but the 'particularistic' one to Kurdish women" (Ibid.).

I would like to end my critique on the backlash to the Turkish feminist framework with a quote from a popular feminist newpaper for women entitled *Pazartesi* which started its publication life in March 1995. The newspaper still publishes and is run by feminists whose politics is parallel to the aforementioned "white Turk" feminists. In 1996 the journal published an article, "Refahyol Debate Continues: Whose Tribune is *Pazartesi*?" which was written by a collective of ten neo-Kemalist feminists. A well-known Islamic feminist, Ayşe Doğu, wrote a piece for the newspaper which was published afterwards. However, an Islamic feminist according to these neo-Kemalists is an embodiment of "backwardness" and the "Orient". I want to draw your attention to a paragraph they wrote as a response that glorifies the early republican feminists:

> In the process of feminist rebellion and gains, they became our national and international honours. They rejected political Islamization and the ideology of the desert which declares women to be slaves and men to be masters. Because Islam could not comply with feminism, it could not make up with women's rights and freedoms. (*Pazartesi* 1996: 10)

In a visible way, we can perceive the indifference of these feminists towards the Middle East. A close reading will be helpful in understanding their unconscious. Islam is portrayed as an ideology of "the desert" which can be associated with the Arab world or the Sharia in Iran. Moreover, this *desert* ideology is making use of women, because they are perceived as slaves. Thus, these feminists compose a simple equation: Islam means the desert, the Arab, or maybe the Iranian, and it is misogynist. This perspective is very much in line with the hegemonic Western feminist paradigms.

As a result, the authoritarian modernization project of the *republican* ruling cadre has invented a social imaginary in which the public sphere is strictly formulated and controlled by its militant secular actors and actresses. The process has resulted in a

process of self-colonization and the employment of subalternizing grand-narratives. There is therefore a paradox of orientals that are orientalizing the Other by inventing an East/South and West/North dichotomy within the same borders.

Chapter 3

From Colonial/Modern AestheTics to Decolonial AestheSis: Shafak and Özdamar as the Nomadic Avant-Gardes

3.1. Introduction

Everything is art. Everything is politics

Ai Weiwei

"In the ghostly repetition of the black woman of Lozells Rd, Handsworth, who sees the future in the past: there are no stories in the riots, only the ghosts of other stories", writes Homi Bhabha (1990: 307) in reference to the movie *Handsworth Songs* (1986) which was directed by John Akomfrah and made in response to the disastrous Handsworth riots that took place in 1985. The riots broke out as a result of raging debates about racial/ethnic minority identities, and the violent rhetoric with racial overtones displayed by the British state against ethnic minorities (i.e. African minorities). Homi Bhabha's emphasis on Akomfrah's movie sets forth his engagement in instrumentalizing "fictional texts to perform theoretical tasks" like other pioneering postcolonial theorists have done such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak (Seyhan 2000: 5). With regard to the above quoted line and the fictional language of the movie, Bhabha in his essay *DissemiNation* (1990) makes it plain that, "The perplexity of the living must not be understood as some existential, ethical anguish of the empiricism of everyday life in 'the eternal living present,' that gives liberal discourse a rich social reference in moral and cultural relativism" (307). Azade Seyhan adds that, "theoretical enunciations can lose their footing on conceptual ground and turn into their own parodies," when one fleshes out such skeletal abstractions "without a story and actors/characters" (2000: 5). As for Seyhan, "Literary expressions of contemporary sociopolitical formations offer critical insights into the manifold meanings of history and take us to galaxies of experience where no theory has gone before" (Ibid.).

Getting back to the film, I would like to evoke the entanglement of fictional representations, that is *telling stories*, and sociopolitical formations by citing John Akomfrah himself before moving on to the focus of this chapter. In November 2013 a talk with Akomfrah took place in Brussels in the context of the DISSENT! Series, an initiative of Argos, Auguste Orts, and Courtisane. In the talk he summarizes the basic

goal of his movie and the fictional language that hints at the "ghosts of other stories" lying behind the riots:

> The diasporic relationship to the archive is a very special one. In the case of the African diaspora in Europe in particular – between 1949 and '69 maybe 2 million people passed through – there is no epitaph, no monument anywhere that tells you that these people ever passed through. Most of them are dead now. The only tangible record of them ever having existed is the archive. But the archive is also paradoxical in the sense that these are also official memories of moments written in the language, or allegedly in the language of the official narratives. (2013)

Thus, for Akomfrah there is a need for a sort of oppostional agency in terms of fictional representations in order to confront dominant discourses: "There is a need of fictions that embrace the 'unknowing' and oppose the view of history as a chain of events on a 'road to salvation' with that of a broken series of paradoxes and reversals in which action is ever open to unaccountable contingency, chance and peripeteia" (Ibid.).

Therefore, it is in a way up to certain writers and artists to give voice to the *ghosts of other stories*, namely, stories of the *Other* that are untold and silenced. On the basis of this statement and Seyhan's argument on the intertwined status of literary expressions with both theory and socio-political formations, I will analyse the work of Elif Shafak and Emine Sevgi Özdamar who, I argue, contribute to the decolonial feminist thinking and decolonial aestheSis by generating a fictional response to the crisis in Turkish feminism. A close reading and analysis of the characterizations of specific female images portrayed in these works will then take place in later chapters.

My emphasis in this chapter will be a prelude to the decolonial aestheSis and the authors' decolonial standpoint which I term "nomadic avant-garde". The choice of the term "avant-garde" is inspired by Hannah Arendt's essay "We Refugees" published in 1943, in the Menorah Journal. In this brief essay Arendt comes up with a paradigm for writing a novel "historical consciousness". Throughout the article she draws a portrait of an assimilated and exilic Jew, Mr. Cohn, whose image as a refugee without a country is overturned by the proposal of a new condition, "the paradigm of a new historical consciousness" (Agamben 1995).

In *East West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey* (2010), Kader Konuk elaborates on how Jewish Germans like the philologist Erich Auerbach fled Nazi persecution in 1933 and were taken in by Turkey so as to assist with the formation of a modernized,

secularized, and westernized Turkish citizenship. Konuk explores how, in the newly founded Turkish Republic, the place of Jews was highly ambiguous:

> In 1928 an assimilationist campaign was launched against Turkish Jews, while only a few years later, in 1933, German scholars—many of them Jewish—were taken in so as to help Europeanize the nation. Turkish authorities regarded the emigrants as representatives of European civilization and appointed scholars like Erich Auerbach to prestigious academic positions that were vital for redefining the humanities in Turkey. (2007: 5)

While the imported Jewish German scholars' Jewishness did not matter at the time, as they were welcomed as Europeans and not as Jews *per se*, Konuk soon reveals that, in fact, "In 1934 thousands of Jewish Turks fled Thrace after having suffered anti-Semitic attacks" (2007: 10). Konuk argues that Turkey at the time possessed "two-fold assimilationist policies. On the one hand, Turkey required of its citizens — regardless of ethnic or religious origins — that they conform to a unified Turkish culture; on the other hand, an equally assimilationist modernization project was designed to achieve cultural recognition from the heart of Europe" (2007: 5). Ironically, the scholar questions "how tropes of Jewishness have played — and continue to play — a critical role in the conception of Turkish nationhood" (Ibid.).

It is within this ironic frame that Shafak and Özdamar can be termed "nomadic avant-garde" female authors whose choice of language and critical, decolonial stance against nationalism and modernism through their narration reveals a different version of Hannah Arendt's paradigm of "historical consciousness". Like Arendt's refugee, both authors are aware that "history is no longer a closed book" (ed. Robinson 1994: 119). It can be re-written and re-told by rejecting the mother tongue and narrating marginalized and subalternized identities and geographies by becoming a 'nomad' with respect to the the default profile of a Turkish citizen. Thus, the uncovering of untold stories and memories embedded within official narratives by way of other languages (i.e. English and German), I argue, provides these authors with a decolonial feminist standpoint. On the basis of this, Elif Shafak writes that:

> Today in Turkey, language is polarized and politicized. Depending on the ideological camp you are attached to, e.g. Kemalists versus Islamists, you can use either an "old" or a "new" set of words. My writing, however, is replete with both "old" and "new" words, and plentiful Sufi expressions that had been systematically excised by the conventional cultural elite. Today in Turkey the Kemalists or leftists have little interest in the past, and the conservatives who seem to be interested in history have little tolerance for critical opinion. I believe it is possible to transcend this polarization. I believe it is possible to be a leftist

> writer who takes religious philosophy seriously. I refuse to pluck words out of language and memories out of collective identity. I refuse to accept the ongoing memory loss in Turkey. Accordingly, I sometimes liken my fiction writing, both in language and content, to walking on a pile of rubble left behind after a catastrophe. I walk slowly so that I can hear if there is still someone or something breathing underneath. I listen attentively to the sounds coming from below to see if anyone, any story or cultural legacy from the past, is still alive under the rubble. If and when I come across signs of life, I dig deep and pull it up, above the ground, shake its dust, and put it in my novels so that it can survive. My fiction is a manifesto of remembrance against the collective amnesia prevalent in Turkey. ("Women Writers" 2005)

She clealry alludes to the Kemalist ideology which made fiction one of the fundamental tools for preaching nationalization, modernization, and westernization to Turkish women. This evangelizing role was particularly given to the first feminist-activist authors (Göknar 2013, Coşkun 2010). Novels written by these feminist authors portrayed the expected ideal of a woman in their characters who were to play a major role in an enlightened and modernized society. Shafak claims that novels by female authors have for a long time been dominated by this mind-set. As previously discussed, Halide Edip Adıvar (*The Shirt of Flame*, 1924) and Fatma Aliye (*Groaning*, 1910) are among the leading authors whose responsibility for portraying the 'ideal women' has been inherited for decades by many feminist writers, for example Ayşe Kulin (Return 2013, Farewell 2009, Aylin 2007), up to the present. Accordingly, in this chapter I will deal with March 12th novelists followed by a section looking at contemporary self-proclaimed feminist writer Ayşe Kulin.

In this dissertation I explore the novels of Shafak and Özdamar written in other languages than their own language, namely Turkish. Özdamar's novels are originally written in German, while Shafak's is initially written in English and later on translated to Turkish. While one major objective of this chapter is to flesh out how these writers exhibit a manifesto-like narrative with regard to their choice of language, another fundamental goal is to have a close look at their literary positioning with reference to other literary works by them and interviews and related articles on their standpoint. I will discuss how they deal with the resurrection of silenced languages (i.e Arabic), aesthetic perceptions, and works of art such as oral tradition (i.e. Sufi and religious tales) through fiction writing. Another significant point is to examine the border-dwelling positioning of these writers between national, trans-national, and multi-cultural literary contexts. Within this context, I introduce decolonial aestheSis which is, "A movement that is naming and articulating

practices that challenge and subvert the hegemony of modern/colonial aestheSis" (Mignolo, "Decolonial AestheSis" 2013).

3.2. Understanding Decolonial AestheSis

Decolonial AestheSis departs from "the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception [...] Modern aestheTics have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices, or, more precisely, other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving" (Mignolo, "Decolonial AestheSis" 2013).

While this represents the overall idea, a much more detailed discussion is necessary to clarify what the notions of "aesthetics" and "aesthesis" imply and to explain the capitalization of the "T" and the "S" in these words. For Mignolo, in its Greek origins aesthesis was perceived "as a process of sensations that was common to all living beings with a nervous system. By the seventeenth century in Europe, the concept of aesthesis was reduced and limited to the capacity to perceive "the sensation of beauty". (Del Val 2013: 145). Nasheli Jiménez Del Val writes as follows on the subject with close reference to Mignolo:

> At this point, Esthetics with a capital E was born, as was the practice of Art with a capital A. This process of the conversion of aesthesis into Esthetics is what Mignolo calls the colonization of aesthesis through Esthetics. This involved the re-writing of the history of aesthetics, converting what is a *particular* theory that ties the perception of sensory stimuli with particular conceptions of beauty into a universal, naturalized conceptualization of beauty. (Ibid.)

Thus, decolonial aestheSis comes to the fore as an option that directs a problematizing gaze at the modern, postmodern, and altermodern aesthetics. Such a stance "simultaneously, contributes to making visible decolonial subjectivities at the confluence of popular practices of re-existence, artistic installations, theatrical and musical performances, literature and poetry, sculpture and other visual arts" (Mignolo, "Decolonial AestheSis" 2013). For Mignolo it is significant to distinguish between decolonial aestheSis and modern aestheTics, as the former has been denied validity under the hegemony of the latter (Ibid.). The capitalization of the "T" and "S" thus mark the difference between these two currents.

In *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994), Ella Shohat and Robert Stam write:

> Endemic in present-day thought and education, Eurocentricism is naturalized as "common sense". Philosophy and literature are assumed to be European philosophy and literature. The "best that is thought and written" is assumed to have been thought and written by Europeans. (By Europeans, we refer not only to Europe per se but also to the "neo-Europeans" of the Americas, Australia, and elsewhere.) History is assumed to be European history, everything else being reduced to what historian Hugh Trevor-Roper (in 1965!) patronizingly called the "unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe." Standard core courses in universities stress the history of "Western" civilization, with the more liberal universities insisting on token study of "other" civilizations. And even "Western" civilization is usually taught without reference to the central role of European colonialism within capitalist modernity. (1)

In this sense, I scrutinize this traditional Western-based epistemology that undervalues spirituality, tradition, the un-modern, and mysticism. Western-based epistemology created a universalized logic based on modernity/coloniality which has also framed the sociopolitical discourses (e.g. gender, race, civic nationalism, vernacular) and aesthetic perceptions of Turkish society, especially regarding the process of secularization and modernization. The attempt to gain distance from all features belonging to the theocratic Ottoman past and its multi-belief and multi-cultural socio-political structure has instead succumbed to a different version of coloniality (i.e self-colonization). According to Mignolo, "there is no modernity without coloniality, that coloniality is constitutive of modernity. That is, modernity/coloniality" (2007: 162). He argues "that while modernity is presented as a rhetoric of salvation, it hides coloniality, which is the logic of oppression and exploitation. Modernity, capitalism and coloniality are aspects of the same package of control of economy and authority, of gender and sexuality of knowledge and subjectivity" (162). In brief, decolonial aestheSis refers to the idea that political, scholarly, and artistic beliefs such as freedom and creativity are deeply bound up with Western aesthetics, cutting off non-Western cultures from their own history and knowledge (Mock 2011).

3.3. Exploring the Process of the Modern/Colonial AestheTics in Turkey and the Significance of Story Writing

To make the pitfalls regarding Turkish feminism more explicit I previously elaborated on the overwhelmingly authoritarian rhetoric of modernization implemented by the Republican ideology. This ideology did not just engage in the reformation of socio-

political and cultural structures, but all dynamics of the Turkish society (e.g. architecture, literature, music, and so on) had shared in the process of cutting ties with a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional, multi-lingual, and traditional Ottoman past. Thus, language and literature needed to be reformulated and applied as distinctive dynamics in order to cut off Turkish society from such a past. I discussed under the heading, "the Kemalist ideology", a concept inspired by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk the founder of the Turkish Republic. Though the post-Ottoman Turkish Republic was never literally colonized, it adopted a self-propagated socio-political and cultural power structure based on Western hegemony. Over time, this sort of hegemony has come to operate "by employing the mechanisms of projection that support the fantasy of 'the West' " (Ahıska 2003: 366).

In *Mother Tongue* (1994), a literary compilation of four stories, Emine Sevgi Özdamar bemoans the loss of her grandfather's language: "I screamed out poems on the anniversaries of Atatürk's death and wept, but he should not have forbidden the Arabic writing. This ban, it's as though half of my head had been cut off" (1994: 33-4). The transformation of the alphabet in 1925 and the language in 1932 reveals one of the dangerous characteristics of modernization, secularization, and nationalism which has led to severe ruptures within Turkish society. Thus, literature and language also shared the same fate with the swiftly transformed social, cultural, and political consciousness in terms of catching up with a belated modernity. The literary intelligentsia was expected to play the role of social architects creating, "A national language and a national literature. This literature, in turn, thrived upon the distinction between 'us' and 'them'"(Shafak 2006: 26). Both the languages and the literatures of the multi-lingual and multi-cultural society shrank on account of notions like progressivism, enlightenment, and modernity. All these reformations and revolutions invented a different version of colonialism with fatal dichotomies. In an interview entitled "Linguistic Cleansing" (2005), Shafak describes the Janus-faced transformation whose architects enforced massive shifts:

> Back in the Ottoman times the alphabet was Ottoman script with mostly Arabic letters, but there were a lot of words coming from the Persian and the Arabic languages. It was a mixture of many things, a multiethnic fabric. However, the Kemalist reformers in 1925 changed the alphabet in a day, but the change does not seem to me as colossal as the change in the language. The alphabet is something more technical, but how can you change a language? We got rid of words coming from Arabic and Persian. As a result, very few people in Turkey question today the Turkeyfication of the language that we went through. I find that very dangerous because I think that linguistic cleansing is something comparable to ethnic cleansing. Imagination shrank, culture and information couldn't flow from one

> generation to another. We have generations of people who don't know the things their grandparents know, who cannot read the writing of their grandparents, who cannot read the names or who don't know the meanings of the street names. (2005: 20)

It was not merely the language and literature that shrank as a result of the secularization, modernization, and Turkification program. Aesthetic perceptions from music to architecture had to be transformed to expedite the flow of time. Sibel Bozdoğan in *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (2001) elucidates how the Republican artists rejected the aesthetics of Ottoman revivalism in architecture, for instance leaving stylistic ornamentation out (2001: 177). The closure of dervish lodges took place in 1925, and the next step was to replace the mosques that did not fit the social imaginary of a secularized society. In the 1930s the Kemalist regime established People's Houses which were regarded as "secular centers of assembly and socialization replacing the traditional function of the mosque" and also dervish lodges essential for both Sunni and Alevi Muslim communities (Bozdoğan 2001: 93). Bozdoğan describes the function and organization of these People's Houses in detail:

> Each People's House was organized in at least three of nine designated activity areas: language- history- literature, the arts, performances, sports, social work, vocational training, library- publications, museums- exhibitions, and village work. Their political and ideological functions notwithstanding, the progressive role played by the People's Houses is evident in these activities. It was in People's House that many provincial Turks living in small towns first encountered theatre, classical music, books, and art exhibitions. (Ibid.)

To impose the historical legitimacy of Kemalist ideology, the state restricted, controlled, and even banned many religious and mystic rituals like the *cem* rituals of the Alevis and the zikir rituals of other Islamic sects (Azak 2010: 144). A crucial feature of this process for Bozdoğan is that the term "colonization" was thoroughly "devoid of all of its negative connotations: it signified a progressive and enlightened state bringing civilization to the countryside" (2001: 105). The enlightened reformers saw it as their essential responsibility to intervene in every social entity which had to be saved from backward, tribal, and traditional social, cultural and aesthetic perceptions.

To get a broader perspective on Shafak and Özdamar's novels as pioneering literary examples of decolonial aestheSis which are decoupled from modern/colonial aesthetics, I would like to discuss two scenes from two different films which shed light on the colonial character of the regime. The first scene is from a short film entitled *Be Happy, It is an Order* (2008) directed and written by acclaimed film producer Sinan Çetin

to contribute to a documentary. The documentary is entitled *The Diaries of Turkey*, "which chronicles the 85-year history of the Turkish Republic" (*Today's Zaman* 2008). The short film starts with a scene from a village in 1934 and a scrolling texts which reads as follows:

> In those years the government of the Turkish Republic had forbidden the playing of Turkish music on the radio. Their purpose was to spread Western music. The young Republic was looking forward to establish the *alafranga* (i.e Western culture) instead of the *alaturca* (i.e. the local culture). (*BHO* 2008)

The scene switches to a group of people gathered in a room where they all enjoy Turkish folk music. The crowd is suddenly interrupted by a group of gendarmes telling them to stop the music because it is forbidden to play it even in private. The following lines spoken by a gendarme reveals a highly questionable viewpoint that lies behind the modernization package: "It is forbidden to sit on the floor like Easterners and play and sing folk songs. From now on we will play Western composers" (Ibid.). Afterwards, the gendarme takes out a list and starts to read the names of composers such as Franz Schubert, Richard Wagner, and many other Western composers. This controversial scene exposes the pure Orientalism and coloniality of the state.

The second film I would like to highlight is *The International* (2006) directed by Sırrı Süreyya Önder and Muharrem Gülmez. In general, the film "focuses on the story of a group of local musicians who are to perform at a large military parade in a small South-Anatolian town in 1982, two years after 12th September" (Tekin 2013: 4). The effects of the coup in Turkey have always been on the same line as the authoritarian secular-state idea it was built upon. Namely, the interventions occured when the state was assumed to have deviated from the Kemalist ideology. "The effects of the coup have been decisive in restructuring the political and social configuration of the country. The oppression, violence and restrictive policies of the military administration had an impact on all levels of the society, and every aspect of social life" (Tekin 2013: 6). In *The International*, the crucial scene with respect to the critical standpoint I display towards the perception of *colonial/modern aestheTics* and self-colonization is when the local musicians perform at a wedding. One of the guests asks the musicians to play the local Kurdish song *Lorke Lorke*. Nevertheless, one of the musicians tells him that the song is among the banned ones. The incident ends up with a tragicomic scene in which the musicians play the *davul*

and the *zurna* with an almost silent low tone and the guests dance the halay with great enthusiasm.

Considering all these governmental and military interventions and the Orientalism which informs them, one can almost come to terms with the idea that the modern Turkish secular state had undertaken the role of Western colonialist agents. Like colonialist agents they were imposing their language and culture on the country on the assumptino that they were rescuing their fellow countrymen from barbarism and backwardness. Similarly, these Turkish versions of colonial agents were implementing a sense of Otherness on the peasants, ethnic minorities (e.g. Armenians, Kurds), and non-Sunni communities. On the other hand, a fuzzy phrase was repeated constantly, "Western in spite of the West", which was partly adopted by the late Ottoman reformers but became the major principle of the Republicans. Then again, Mesut Erşan in his article "The Thoughts of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk About Westernization" (2006) cites a very questionable statement by a leading Republican scholar of law. That is, "Heading towards the West from the East is a historical law" according to Tarık Zafer Tunaya who also signed documents in support of the military intervention in 1960 that cost the lives of the prime minister of the time and two other statesmen (45). The previous perspective I presented which calls for westernization despite the West vis-à-vis the quoted statement by a leading Republican unveils how nationalization (i.e. Turkification) and westernization have been intertwined in Turkey.

In this context, for decolonial theorist Enrique Dussel modernity is closely linked with westernization, as the phenomenon of modernity has a "clear Eurocentric connotation" (2006: 6). For Liah Greenfeld it is impossible to develop modernity outside of nationalism, because "nationalism is a product or reflection of major components of modernization" (1992: 18). With regard to the Turkish secular nation state Partha Chatterjee's statement hits upon the unfortunate paradoxes such as self-colonizatio and hegemonic perceptions that disdain and even ban traditions (e.g. local music, dances, rituals), cultural habits, and the religious and spiritual values of various communities:

> The very idea of nationalism being rational and self-conscious attempt by the weak and poor peoples of the world to achieve autonomy and liberty is demonstrably false. Nationalism as an ideology is irrational, narrow, hateful and destructive. It is not an authentic product of any of the non-European civilization, which in each particular case, it claims as its classical heritage. It is wholly a European export to the rest of the world. It is

> also one of Europe's most pernicious exports, for it is not a child of reason or liberty, but of their opposite: of fervent romanticism, of political messianism whose inevitable consequences is the annihilation of freedom. (1986: 7)

Chatterjee's focus is on the sweeping social and cultural change along with the contribution of modernization in India, but *mutatis mutandis* it well describes the parallel processes in Turkey. On account of all these arguments, it is once again clear that the interplay between modernization, secularization, and civic nationalism in Turkey has generated fatal dichotomies like modern/traditional (i.e. local traditions, religion and spirituality), Western/Eastern (Southern/Northern), civic Turkish identity/Others (i.e. Kurds, Armenians, Alevis, Syriacs, non-Sunnis). As a consequence, the Orientalist-minded agents of the secular and modern social imaginary rejected and even banned cultural and aesthetic perceptions that did not fit into their big picture, the Westernized "mimic state".

The starting point of this chapter was post-colonial cultural criticism (e.g. Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak) and its emphasis on literary works. It is essential to emphasize that I at no point perceive postcolonialism and decolonialism as opposites. Rather, I argue that decolonialism is an alternative to postcolonialism. Therefore, to begin with references to postcolonialism and postcolonial critics is to endorse my standpoint to the reader in terms of perceiving both viewpoints as equally useful for this research.

For Leila Harris, the analysis of Turkish modernization closely coincides with "developmental and postcolonial concerns and geographies" (2008: 1698). Harris employs Homi Bhabha's 'mimicry' while scrutinizing Turkish self-colonization, that is, Turkey has become a "'mimic state' and 'mimic nation' par excellence" (2008: 1702). While Bhabha's term is linked to the enforcement of mimicry through colonial pathways, she notes that the Turkish state eagerly "incorporated Western and European ideals, including dichotomies between European modernism and non-European atavism" (1702). On the basis of this viewpoint, I relate Shafak and Özdamar and their literary works to Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldua who inspires non-Western feminist frameworks and literature with the phrase she coined: 'mestiza consciousness' or the 'mestiza rhetoric'. The mestiza "can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence" (Anzaldua 1987: 102). Furthermore, it is a standpoint located precisely on the "fulcrum", that juncture "where the phenomena

tend to collide" (Ibid.). The mestiza consiousness is not an attempt to reconcile binaries. Rather, it is about a third element, the shifting to a different epistemological zone. In brief, it is a new consciousness which though being "a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspects of each new paradigm" (Ibid.). During an interview with Andrea Lunsford, Anzaldua elucidates how her story writing and literary techniques are blended with identity politics:

> For me writing has always been about narrative, about story; and it still is. Theory is a kind narrative. Science — you know, physics — that is a narrative, that is a hit on reality. Anthropology has its narrative. And some are master narratives, and some are outsider narratives. There is that whole struggle in my writing between the dominant culture's traditional, conventional narratives about reality and about literature and about science and about life and about politics; and my other counter-narratives as a *mestiza* growing up in this country, as an internal exile, as an inner exile, as a post-colonial person, because the Mexican race in the United States is the colonized people. (2004: 38)

According to Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, story telling is about power, and in her speech entitled *The Danger of A Single Story* (Ted 2009) she expresses her perspective through an Igbo word which is "nkali". Ngozi loosely translates the noun as "to be greater than another" (Ibid.). Subsequently, she expands the meaning of "nkali" and story telling: "Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power" (Ibid.). This is where postcolonial criticism (i.e. postcolonial literature) comes to the fore and intersects with feminist representational and epistemological concerns. This leads us to the "politics of location" which Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer explains with reference to African-American feminist writer bell hooks who emphasizes "the necessity of material displacement for rethinking one's location in shifting power relations, albeit from the point of view of marginality rather than centrality" (2004: 3). This standpoint within a different epistemological zone is, according to Donna Haraway, "where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (Haraway 1991: 195). And on account of Anzaldua and Ngozi this can be initiated by story telling:

> Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but also to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story, and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have and entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story. (Ngozi, *TED* 2009)

It was as a result of Jean Ryhs' postcolonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) that we realized there was another story to *Jane Eyre*'s (1847) mad woman, Antoinette Cosway. Moreover, it was Assia Djebar, an Algerian writer, who revealed the story behind Eugène Delacroix's Orientalist painting *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1834), and contextualized the painting in historical French colonialism. She would give voice to the muted women in the painting, namely the Orientalist imagery (1980). It was Fatima Mernissi who through *Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems* (2001) perfectly wrote against the Orientalist imagery of subjugated, secluded, lustful, and exotic Muslim women. She even turns the tables on the Orientalist imagery of the West, and coins a new phrase, "the Western Harem".

Taking into account these postcolonial feminist writings, these writings' epistemological concerns and their resistance against dominant narratives like that of Anzaldua's has stimulated me to work on Shafak and Özdamar who have the same unique status within the Turkish context. That is, the recognition, questioning, and confronting of internal Orientalism (i.e. self-colonization) that doubly colonizes particular female identities (i.e. minority, diasporic, working class, Islamist, and peasants) mostly took place in literature only after the '80s. Nevertheless, to brush off the 'March 12th novels' by early so-called 'feminist' novelists of the seventies might be unfair: according to Evren Karataş, it was precisely during the seventies that the notion of a "women's movement" emerged and gradually gained power (2009: 1659).

3.4. Success or Backlash: The "March 12th" Revolutionary Female Authors

Most of the March 12th novels deal with the traumatic loss of political freedom and the bloody battle between leftists and nationalists in the aftermath of the military intervention on March 12th 1971. Those well-known female novelists of the time were considerably influenced by the 1968 left-wing student movements in Europe and were therefore sympathetic to the socialists who were attempting to recover from the damage which the military coup had done (Alver 2012: 775). The most famous March 12th female novelists were Füruzan (*Those Born in '47*, 1975), Adalet Ağaoğlu (*Lying Down to Die*, 1973), Sevgi Sosyal (*Tante Rosa*, 1968), and Pınar Kür (*Tomorrow, Tomorrow*, 1976). Their novels are "notable for their specific focus on the complicated, or indeed confused, status

of women during the period" and most of their lead protagonists are portrayed as intellectual revolutionary women (Ibid.).

Unfortunately, "the question of female empowerment was largely ignored by the left wing during the period" (Alver 2012: 776). With reference to Ali Murat Akser, Ahmet Alver attributes this ignorance to the perspective of the major leftist figures who "at the time argued that the need for autonomous female political activity was unnecessary: once the socialist revolution had been achieved, gender equality issues would be discarded as a class-related problem" (Ibid.). Thus, these revolutionary female intellectuals' debate about women's role through their literary texts remained superficial. What is more, these allegedly feminist novels nourished female stereotypes such as peasant and rural women being ignorant and conservative. Ahmet Alver attributes this approach to the still dominant Kemalist portrayal of women as markers of modernity. These women in the March 12th novels are seen as being deeply ignorant of how they are being controlled by the patriarchy, enjoying physical violence towards them and viewing themselves as animalistic reproductive entities (Alver 2012: 779).

Alver focuses on the particular female models portrayed within these novels with the same categorizing mind-set as in the previously mentioned literary works:

> Just as revolutionary women are compared to bourgeoisie women, they are also compared to rural women to highlight the divide between the illiterate, backward, and conservative nature of rural women and their progressive, urban counterparts. This discourse is slightly problematic as the March Twelfth authors, along with their characters, inherit it from the Kemalist definition of women as markers of modernity: rural women in the March Twelfth novels are seen as being hugely ignorant of the way in which they are controlled by the patriarchy, enjoying physical violence towards them and viewing themselves as animalistic reproductive entities. On the one hand, this seems to justify them revolutionary intellectual female movement: these women need educating to save them from abuse. However, such a patronising view is undoubtedly what alienated rural peasants from the intellectual leftist movement, which ultimately caused the downfall of the left. (Ibid.)

Clearly, these novels written by Turkish female authors with feminist tendencies have very often embodied a didactic narrative that, to a significant degree, presupposes the existing hegemonic atmosphere within the dominant Turkish feminist framework. Recently, Pınar Kür, one of the March 12th feminist novelists, appeared on CNN Türk to argue that veiled women possess exactly the same perception as women who pose nude for *Playboy* ("Contradictory Questions" April, 2014). In response, the *Daily Sabah* journalist Meryem Ilayda Atlas wrote in her column:

> I can't blame Kür for making such a comparison between the Playboy girls and covered Muslim women. She is typical of her generation, cultural class and affiliation with secular identity. These words are typical for an exclusivist group called White Turks who are secular, consider themselves the most Westernized and are an economically privileged part of Turkish society. The more secularism was understood as a call to reach a homogenous, faceless society, the less it raised a society with principles of equality since a majority of the people lost the right to express themselves. The aim of modernization was to reach a Westernized society in all aspects and by any means. The reflection of this idea found its roots more in aesthetic, not in substance. (April 11, 2014)

It is quite a failure for a female author like Kür who belongs to the group of "intellectual revolutionary women" and who, to some extent, has affiliated herself with the left wing movement with her novels to prompt such a condemnation (Alver 2012: 775)

3.5. Ayşe Kulin: A Contemporary Self-Proclaimed Feminist Author

The responsibility of portraying "ideal women" has been inherited for decades by many feminist writers, and today Ayşe Kulin (Return 2013, Farewell 2009, Aylin 2007) is just the latest in this tradition. Kulin displays the same 'rhetoric of modernity/ logic of coloniality' and disguised nationalism as the Kemalist regime. In her novels (e.g. *One Day*, 2005) traditional and particularly non-Turkish women are portrayed as the counter-image, the non-approved woman, while the westernized and modernized Turkish female characters are portrayed positively and are pictured as role models. In her novels we do not really encounter complex groups of women, geographies, and diverse spaces. The people, specifically the women, and the geography (e.g. Kurds and Armenians in Eastern Turkey) that they are attached to are mainly silenced, invisible, and orientalized through the narratives.

Journalist Sevgi Akarçeşme argued in an article entitled "White Turk literature" which makes reference to Kulin that mainstream literature in Turkey is dominated by these so-called White Turks, above all female writers, who appear to target a broad audience but "hardly tell stories about the average person in Turkey" (*Today's Zaman*, August 25, 2013). Despite the fact that, as Akarçeşme observes, Kulin's narrative, characters and plot are mostly detached from the "other Turkey", her novels nevertheless enjoy great success, as, for example, did her most recent novel, *Return* (2013).

> All the characters are highly educated urbanites with high incomes and very secular lifestyles. There is no trace of religion in their daily lives, and there is a lot of alcohol consumption, something that is not very common in average Turkish households. Of course, every author is entitled to write whatever he or she sees fit, but the uniformity of

> the characters and their stark detachment from the "other Turkey" is impossible to overlook. (Akarçeşme 2013)

In an interview with the Dutch online culture magazine *8 Weekly* she reveals that she is a feminist because in Turkey a female author like her cannot be anything other than a feminist (June 6, 2014). Surprisingly, she also claims that she is an activist for marginalized individuals such as Christian and Jewish Turks, homosexuals, Kurds, and women who are never sent to school (Ibid.). However, when one reads Kulin's novel *One Day* (2005), which alludes the Kurdish issue in Turkey, one realizes that the portrayal of Turkish and the Kurdish women in the novel is obviously based on a crude 'modern Turk'/'ignorant Kurd' dichotomy (*Radikal*, July 17, 2005). As Kulin related later, the Kurdish female character in the novel stands for Leyla Zana, the first Kurdish female politician to win a seat in the Turkish parliament in 1991, whom Kulin asked if she could write a biography about her but who rebuffed this offer (Ibid.). Kulin explicitly underlines the Kurdish character's inadequacy with regard to her education and participation in social life, suggesting that Zana was right to demur at Kulin's offer to be her biographer (Ibid.). For Çağlayan, the novel portrays a Zana who has no voice, which, ironically, legitimizes Kulin's modern Turkish female character to speak in her name (Ibid.).

Furthermore, on the same program on which Pınar Kür appeared, Kulin expressed deeply controversial views about the Armenian diaspora and genocide: "I like Armenians very much, but those were deportations during the war. It is difficult to call what happened during the war genocide. They didn't do anything to them like the Jews. We did not butcher the Armenians without a reason" ("'We Didn't Butcher the Armenians without Reason,' Says Turkish Writer" February, 2014). Armenian-Turkish poet and columnist Karin Karakaşlı in an article entitled "Genocide as the Hidden Subject" states that literature within geographies where official history is blurred with lies and myths should function as an apparatus of unveiling stories of silenced and excluded peoples (*Agos* February 6, 2014). Karakaşlı elaborates on the "hidden subject", the "we", in Kulin's talk. The "we" stands against the "they", namely "us" and the "others". Karakaşlı also emphasizes that in Turkish grammar there can be a "hidden subject" (gizli özne) in a sentence in addition to the explicit grammatical subject. The existence of a "hidden subject" in Turkish language, literature — even aesthetic perceptions in general — is a product of the ethnicist, colonialist, and discriminatory Kemalist ideology. Paradoxically,

the hidden subject includes an invisible epistemological territory in which painful stories, particularly those of diasporas (e.g. Armenian and Turkish), of ethnic minorities (e.g. Kurds), of the working class, and of religious women are silenced through the dominant "white Turk" feminist discourse.

Unfortunately, like Orientalist writers and painters, these female novelists have succumbed to Fatima Mernissi's 'Orientalist imagery' and Nilüfer Göle's secular-modern 'social imaginary'. Most of these literary figures, as earlier stated by Shafak, do not question or scrutinize the modernization, secularization, and nationalization reforms and revolutions with which communities were ripped from their languages, their values, and even their perceptions of aesthetics. To reach out for the stories of "other" women demands a shift of epistemological and so artistic zones. The mestiza consciousness demands an "other" language, and an "other" terrain. As Salman Rushdie remarks, "If you want to give voice to the voiceless, you've got to find a language". It is at this juncture that the work of Shafak and Özdamar will be analysed later on.

3.6. Decolonial AestheSis and the "Other" Tongue

The most important touchstone of a nation-state is the national language. The linkage between language and ethnic identity "became common in Europe from the time of the Renaissance, when many writers and philosophers decided to use the vernacular instead of Latin" (Oakes 2001: 21). The notion of national language was further developed by German philosophers such as Herder, Fichte, and Humboldt through the nineteenth century. According to Herder the most precious possession of a nation is the language of its ancestors. Herder perceives the national language as a metaphoric terrain in which dwells the "entire world of tradition, history, religion, principles of existence" of a nation (quoted in Oakes 2001: 22). It was the very concept of homogeneous national languages and cultures that invented the purification and hybridization of *imagined communities* as Benedict Anderson puts it.

Language was and remains a major marker of the power structures of coloniality/modernity:

> Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of

> the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (Fanon 1986: 18)

Slavoj Žižek notes that there is an interplay between language and violence which, syllogistically, leads to the conclusion that nationalism equals violence ("Language, Violence and Non-violence" 2008) Accordingly, Žižek develops the idea that, "reason (ratio) and race have the same root" and language is "the first and greatest divider" (Ibid.). Nevertheless, the violence of the language does not lie in its assumed role as a divider, but rather in its role as a tool of the colonial matrix of power as decolonial theorist Anibal Quijano terms it: "[This] colonial structure of power produced the specific social discriminations which later were codified as 'racial', 'ethnic', 'anthropological' or 'national', according to the times, agents, and populations involved" (2007: 168). Quijano remarks that, "these intersubjective constructions, product of Eurocentered colonial domination were even assumed to be 'objective', 'scientific', categories, then of a historical significance" (Ibid.). Political colonialism is eliminated from history, however coloniality "refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production" (Mignolo 2009: 97). It is kept alive "in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self images of peoples, in aspirations of self" and many other aspects of our experience with modernity (Ibid.).

Language becomes the primary tool for bridging the gap between the knowing subject, the enunciator, and "others". Thus, if "race" and "reason", as Žižek argues, come from the same root whose greatest divider is language, then language and its narratives become thoroughly physical:

> Science (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be detached from language, languages are not just 'cultural' phenomena in which people find their 'identity'; they are also the location where knowledge is inscribed. And, since languages are not something human beings have but rather something of what humans beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engedered the coloniality of being. (Mignolo 2009: 96)

Language is not merely taken as the chief pillar of a nation, however; it has become a weapon of both physical and epistemological tyranny through Western-based political colonialism. Quoting Ray Gwyn Smith in her well-known chapter, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" from *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldua rhetorically asks, "Who is to say that robbing a people of its language is less violent than war?" (75).

The imposition of modern and civilized geographies vis-à-vis inferior geographies has generated the geopolitics and body politics of knowledge which "universalizes European thought as scientific truths, while subalternizing and invisibilizing other epistemes" and (human) beings (Walsh 2007: 224). The racial and epistemic axes of the Eurocentric colonial/modern power relations possess a deeply capitalist character which has proven to be more durable with the so-called globalization myth. As a consequence, capitalism has converged with print technology, which Anderson conceptualizes as 'print-capitalism' (2006: 48). This convergence of printed language and capitalism, "created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation" (Ibid.). With the rising of nationalism and emphasis on the vernacular, language gained a biological and organicist imagery based on hybridization and purity which generated a civic model of membership. Yasemin Yıldız in *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (2012) argues that all these myths and imageries which centre on "language purism" gave rise to "the mother tongue discourse" (74). Accordingly, Mignolo relates all the universalized Eurocentric epistemology to the main pillars of the colonial matrix of power, namely patriarchy and racism:

> Patriarchy and racism are two pillars of Eurocentric knowing, sensing, and believing. These pillars sustain a structure of knowledge – Christian theology, secular philosophy (including aesthetics) and secular sciences. This structure is embedded and embodied in actors, institutions, languages that regulate and manage the world. (2014: 206-7)

In this context, what if language as the colonial and political unconscious of the nation suddenly becomes a battleground, and loses its atavistic fulcrum when the once colonized starts to write back?

> If language is the single most important determinant of national identity, as many have argued, and narratives (specifically, epics and novels) institute and support national myths and shape national consciousness (e.g. Finnish epic Kalevala), what happens when the domain of national language is occupied by nonnative writers, writers whose native, mother, home or community language is not the one they write in? (Seyhan 2000: 8)

What if two Turkish female writers, Shafak and Özdamar, coming from an officially never colonized country were to write stories inspired by their homeland with the so-called colonial languages (i.e. English and German)? English became an imperial/colonial language with the growth of the British Empire from the late sixteenth century onwards. Its most powerful tool was linguistic imperialism with which it implemented the cover

story of colonialism, namely that colonialism has a civilising mission and that the colonised will benefit socially and educationally (Talib 2002: 6). On the other hand, German was the language of a powerful nation-state (i.e. the German Empire) towards the end of the nineteenth century. As a latecomer to Eurocentric colonial/imperial history, the German approach to nation state building hurried into discourses based on pure civic nationalism and monolingualism. German speaking Jews such as Franz Kafka were the first to confront the denial of aesthetic creativity. Yıldız, with reference to Richard Wagner's essay "Judaism in Music" (1850, revised and expanded 1869), writes that the German discourse on aesthetics and creativity yielded to a dichotomy between communities such as Jews and the native Germans. German writers and composers like Wagner argued that, "A language, with its expression and its evolution, is not the work of scattered units, but of a historical community: only he who has unconsciously grown up within the bond of this community, takes also any share in its creations" (Wagner quoted in Yıldız 2012: 36). The historical community Wagner refers to is that of European art and so (in his view) of civilization as a whole. According to Mignolo, "monoculture of the mind" and monolingualism depends on the prevailing geopolitics of knowledge and perceptions, namely aesthetics (2012: xvii). The monoculture of the mind presumes that there is "only one reality, and the epistemic struggle is for the truth of that mono-topic and homogeneous world. The ontology of essences is territorial, and as such it does not admit truth in the paranthesis" (Ibid.).

Under these circumstances, the colonial/modern languages Shafak and Özdamar employ might embody the danger of reproducing or reifying complete otherness in terms of Middle Eastern women's sexual, racial, and social distinctiveness within and outside their own culture: the escape to another language, which is here languages of the colonial matrix of power, might bear another form of otherness. We might answer this by turning the question on its head: What if Shafak and Özdamar's mother tongue, Turkish, is built upon a similar version of power relations based on the monoculture of the mind which has its own disguised story of tyranny and violence? Indeed, the politics of the mother language of these writers was an imposed language through the state-led project of Turkification, secularization, and modernization. The Ottoman empire had a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic structure, and so the Turkish state "re-made itself as a nation-state in the European mold" (Yıldız 2012: 150). The founder of the Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal,

and his followers in 1928 announced the change of the Ottoman alphabet. The Ottoman language had been an amalgam of Persian, Turkish, and Arabic and was written in a variant of the Perso-Arabic script. Strong aspirations to build civic nationalism by mimicking European nation-states demanded an end to the Ottoman legacy which was characterized by ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity without a significant degree of assimilation to a hegemonic Ottoman culture.

For Erik Jan Zürcher, the alphabet revolution promoted so energetically by the Republican cadre was obviously ideological, "It was yet another way to cut off Turkish society from its Ottoman and Middle Eastern Islamic traditions and to reorient it towards the West" (2004: 189). However, Zürcher notes that the illiteracy level in the villages remained extremely high even as late as the early 1990s (Ibid.). Eventually, following the alphabet revolution in 1928, from 1932 onwards the Turkish language went through a process of 'purification' in which many Arabic and Persian were purged from the language and replaced with 'authentically' Turkic equivalents (190). For Yıldız, the clearest evidence of the ideological intentions behind these changes is that the linguistic engineers were more than happy to accept French loanwords while being ruthless in the removal of Arabic and Persian loanwords (2012: 151). She underscores "how closely the linguistic politics was tied to the larger political goal of 'Westernization' and 'De-Orientalizations'" (Ibid.). Altering and purifying the language continued until the mid-1980s, only thereafter slowing down but never quite coming to an end. Consequently, Marion James argues with reference to Geoffrey Lewis and his ground-breaking book, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (1999), that, "by simplifying the language, Turkish has lost its rich shades of meaning. Thought, concept, reflection, sentiment, consideration […] all of these become "düşünce" in Turkish" (*Today's Zaman* February 28, 2010).

Both Shafak and Özdamar are critical of the homogenization and purification of the Turkish language which has also negatively influenced oral traditions and religious/spiritual aesthetic perceptions. Before discussing their views on "story writing" and their choice of language, which I consider a shift from modern/colonial aestheTics to decolonial aestheSis, I will focus on the colonizing and self-colonizing aspects of the Turkish language revolution. Mignolo's phrase "monoculture of the mind" applies to the Turkish version of the swift transition from a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual empire to a

Western-based 'mimicking' nation-state. Ross Poole describes this illusionary structure as follows: "The basic framework is provided by language and cultural symbols in terms of which we become aware of ourselves and of others. Though our native language is not part of our natural equipment, it becomes a second nature" (1999: 68). For him it provides "the taken for granted and inescapable framework within which we think, experience, imagine and dream. It provides us with a primary form of self- and other-consciousness[...] It is most intimately involved in the ways in which we perceive the world, the forms in which we think and even in the manner in which we experience our feelings and emotions... [native language] enters into our most intimate sense of self at the same time it defines as special relationship with those other selves who share the same world, think in the same way, and experience the same emotions" (Ibid.).

The language revolution, as Geoffrey Lewis terms it, was a "catastrophic success". On the one hand, it was successful in distributing and imposing the necessity of the new language to the new citizens, on the other hand, we have to bear in mind that the new state did not really consist of one single group of people. Though the Armenians were deported in 1915, and the Greek-Turkish population exchanged in 1924, the population within the borders of the new state was not essentially homogenized: "Considerable number of linguistic and religious minorities still lived in Turkey", and "according to the first population census of the Republic, conducted in 1927, Turkey's population of 13.6 million held around 2 million people for whom Turkish was not the native language" (Aslan 2007: 245). Senem Aslan translates a local newspaper from Izmir dating to 1928: "Citizen, do not make friends with or shop from those so-called Turkish citizens who do not speak Turkish. We request from our lady citizens who work as telephone operators: Please immediately cut off conversations in Greek and Ladino" (Ibid.). In those years there was a campaign called, "Citizen, speak Turkish!", which, "aimed to eradicate the visibility and audibility of non-Turkish languages and... was one of the important initiatives of the Turkification attempts in the early years of the Turkish Republic" (Aslan 2007: 246). Particular municipalities (e.g. Kurdish ones) were even ordered to make those who did not speak Turkish in public pay fines (Bali 2000: 136-7). Radical policies took place in later years with the Settlement Law of 1934 that "relocated some Kurdish speakers from the eastern parts of Turkey to the West to make them learn Turkish and assimilate into Turkish culture. The law also banned those whose mother tongue was not

Turkish from setting up villages or districts" (2007: 252). The campaign "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" was one of the first signs of the "othering" of individuals, communities, and perceptions in Turkey. As Erik Zürcher notes:

> The Kemalist leadership did inspire a great many people—mostly writers, teachers, doctors and other professionals, and students—with its vision of a modern, secular, independent Turkey. These people, who saw themselves as an elite, with a mission to guide their ignorant compatriots, often worked very hard and with great personal sacrifice for their ideals. (2004:181)

I also wish to emphasize the interpretational and mythical aspect of the Turkification process (see Poole above) which shows how language, as the main tool of nationalism, generates a questionable portrayal of identity politics. Žižek's "violence of language" and civic nationalism will become obvious from the story of Agop Dilaçar or Adil Dilaçar, otherwise known as Hagop Martayan, who was the major linguist to work on the language reformation. Martayan was apparently of Armenian origin. He fought in World War I on the Turkish side but frequently faced suspicion because of his ethnic identity. After the war and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire he became estranged from the land he once belonged to. For some time he taught English in Beirut, but decided to move to Sofia and settle down. There he started to teach ancient Turkish and the Uighur language. The decision of the republican cadre to purify the Turkish language would change Martayan's life. His distinguished articles on the Turkish language gained the attention of the republicans who immediately invited him to Turkey. Nevertheless, he was expelled from Turkish citizenship, and as an expatriate was only given a private document that stated his exceptional status.

Columnist Levent Özata underscores the fact that Martayan was not particularly interested in Turkish. Rather, he was in love with many other languages such as German, Russian, Bulgarian, and Azerbaijani Turkish (*Agos* September 21, 2012). Özata then asks if Martayan really had a special interest in Turkish, or whether it was simply that he had no other choice. Though Martayan was the main actor in the Turkish language revolution, he was never given the status of a founding president of the "Society for the Study of the Turkish Language" (later known as the Turkish Language Association) established in 1932. The most crucial part is how Hagop Martayan became Adil Dilaçar. It was Atatürk himself who "rewarded" Martayan with his surname that can be loosely translated as "opening the language". Another fact is that it was Martayan who gave Mustafa Kemal

the surname Atatürk, meaning " ancestor of the Turks". When Martayan died in 1979, in his obituary and on the news his real name and identity was changed to the Turkish Adil Dilaçar. That the Armenian born Martayan died as the Turkish Adil Dilaçar is a clear example of how the Turkification process followed the same path as we find in Western nation-state models.

Shafak and Özdamar's narrative strategy of escaping the mother tongue by embracing English and German respectively can be regarded as an escape from the racist, colonial, and discriminatory politics of the mother tongue. With this, they offer a critical perspective on the process of Turkification and thus on the politics of the secular-nation state. As Žižek would put it, the only way to articulate the truth about the violence of language is through language, or rather, "by way of torturing language" (2008). By 'torturing' language, Shafak and Özdamar open up the "colonial wound" as Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez would call it in their dossier "Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings" (2013). The colonial wounds mentioned here are specifically those of "patriarchy and racism that are two pillars of Eurocentric knowing, sensing, and believing" (Mignolo 2014: 206). The structure of knowledge unconsciously imposed on us by these pillars is inspired by the "Christian theology, secular philosophy (including aesthetics) and secular sciences" (Ibid.). It operates through language, actors, and institutions and makes "people feel inferior" (Ibid.). As soon as the colonial wound is opened the healing process can start. The healing process and the shifting from modern/colonial aestheTics to decolonial aestheSis occurs as follows:

> It operates through making people feel inferior. When that happens, the decolonial wound is opened. Healing is the process of delinking, or regaining your pride, your dignity, assuming your entire humanity in front of an un-human being that makes you believe you were abnormal, lesser, that you lack something. How do you heal that? Through knowing, understanding, decolonial artistic creativity and decolonial philosophical aestheSis, and above all by building the communal (not the Marxist commune, neither the liberal common good, but the communal; the legacies of "communities" beyond Eurocentric legacies of Christian and secular family and "society"). (Mignolo 2014: 207)

This is exactly where Shafak and Özdamar stand, as both novelists travel back and forth to bring back the invisible and silenced legacies of their pre-secularized, pre-nationalized, and pre-modernized communities in stories told by grandmothers and mothers. For instance, whenever the narrator in Özdamar's novel listens to the stories told by her grandmother, she "would go backwards in the tale, back to the door" and a door opens

for her that uncovers unknown stories (*Life is a Caravanserai* 2000: 140). On the other hand, in Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) it is auntie Banu, the pious and headscarved aunt of Asya, who travels back to the Armenian diaspora that took place in 1915 with the help of her djinns.

This traveling between worlds and stories is effected through use of the so-called hegemonic Western languages (i.e. German and English). However, both novelists share the same critical perspective about the purification and homogenization of the language for the sake of civic nationalism. According to Shafak, it is in fact impossible to perceive the mother tongue as an essential tool which will enrich the writer's literary texts:

> Some people take their mother tongue for granted. Just the sheer fact that it is your mother tongue doesn't mean you know it or you profess it. I don't see language as something we profess; I don't see it as a vehicle, as a tool. I see it as a space, as a continent we enter into. And continents shrink. Our imagination shrinks. The way we think shrinks. (2005: 19)

Though most people indirectly relate the richness of her language to her mother tongue, for Shafak it rests upon losing contact with it several times:

> As a writer who happens to be a woman, and attached to Islamic, as well as Jewish and Christian heterodox mysticism, I reject the rationalized, disenchanted, centralized, Turkified modern language put in front of me. Today in Turkey, language is polarized and politicized. Depending on the ideological camp you are attached to, e.g. Kemalists versus Islamists, you can use either an 'old' or a 'new' set of words. My writing, however, is replete with both 'old' and 'new' words, and plentiful Sufi expressions that had been systematically excised by the cultural elite. (*Hürriyet Daily News* February 20, 2005)

While culture has been modernized, language has been Turkified. The linguistic cleansing of the language is "something comparable to ethnic cleansing" (2005: 20). Even today, very few people question the Turkification of the language. Besides its ethnicist and discriminatory features, the so-called purification of the Turkish language is highly confining:

> Imagination shrank, culture and information couldn't flow from one generation to another. We have generations of people who don't know the things their grandparents know, who cannot read the writing of their grandparents, who cannot read the names or who don't know the meanings of the street names. The language of the Ottoman time is quite magic and unique. And it takes the same effort to learn it today as it does to learn another language. (Ibid.)

Our aesthetic perceptions are confined within a mythical framework based on coloniality/modernitywhich rejects any perceptions and conceptions from non-European, traditional, and religious/mystic epistemologies.

On the other hand, Özdamar's view regarding this linguistic cleansing demands a glimpse at her semi-fictional autobiography entitled *Mother Tongue (Mutterzunge)* (1990) which is a collection of stories. She writes the stories within the migratory context of the Turkish Diaspora in Germany of which she is a part. The first two stories are *Mother Tongue (Mutterzunge)* and *Grandfather's Tongue (Großvaterzunge)*, in which she questions language and its link to national identity. For Meliz Ergin, *Mother Tongue* is a literary text which exposes Özdamar's critical standpoint against "identitarian purism within the nation", in particular when this is based on linguistic cleansing and the "self-colonialism experienced in Turkey" (2009: 91). Özdamar laments the loss of the Arabic language and in a way blames Atatürk for it: "I screamed out poems on the anniversaries of Atatürk's death and wept, but he should not have forbidden the Arabic writing. This ban, it's as though half of my head had been cut off" (1994: 33-4). As a consequence, the protagonist (Özdamar) decides to take Arabic lessons which implies her challenge to the pillars of secularization and modernization of the Turkish nation-state:

> I am going to go back to the other Berlin. I am going to learn Arabic, which was once our system of writing. After our war of liberation, 1927, Atatürk outlawed the Arabic script and brought in the Latin letters. My grandfather only knew Arabic script, I only know the Latin alphabet, which means that if my grandfather and I had been unable to speak and could only tell each other things in writing, we would have been unable to tell each other stories. Perhaps only by going back to Grandfather will I be able to find my way back to my mother, back to my mother tongue. (15)

This passage reveals many aspects of Özdamar's literary and socio-political perception. When she has lived for some time in Germany, she realizes she has lost her mother tongue. Thereupon she writes, "A tongue has no bones: twist it in any direction and it will turn that way. I sat with my twisted tongue in this city, Berlin... If only I knew when I lost my mother tongue" (9). What Özdamar implies with the tongue image and the main title of her literary text, *Mutterzunge*, is a reference to the Turkish version of mother tongue. 'Tongue' (*dil*) in Turkish also means language (just as in English), whereas in German 'language' is *Sprache*. The use of *Zunge* (tongue) instead of *Sprache* can, at first, be taken as an overly literal translation by a migrant writer still not totally familiar with German. However, her emphasis on the boneless anatomical feature of the tongue refers to the impossibility of an untouched and pure national language, and therefore to the illusions which inform the project of national identity as a whole. Furthermore, she severs the umbilical cord between the sense of belonging and the vernacular, since "the emergence

of vernacular print languages, their spread through large numbers of population, and their coming to play privileged role in public and private life" is believed to provide "the foundation for a shared sense of belonging" (Poole 1999: 68). Nevertheless, Özdamar does not strive to connect with her own mother tongue (Turkish), instead going back to her grandfather's language (Arabic) through which she imagines that she will find her identity. In this context, with reference to Azade Seyhan I argue that Özdamar and Shafak have something in common:

> Özdamar implicitly maintains that she can have much easier access to the study of Arabic in Germany than in Turkey, where her desire to reclaim her 'grand-father tongue' could be construed as a reactionary gesture in the context of the laicist ideology that underwrites modern Turkish education. (2000: 122)

The laicist and modernizing ideology is the cover story of the ethnicist, discriminatory, oppressive, and silencing socio-political and cultural formulations in Turkey from which Shafak and Özdamar escape by writing in the language of the "other".

Thus, the healing of the "colonial wound" Mignolo depicted earlier seems to apply to Shafak and Özdamar's critical stance against modernity/coloniality. Nevertheless, the question I formerly raised about their writing in the colonial/modern language needs a detailed analysis through the lenses of decolonial aestheSis. I argued that employing these languages might embody the danger of reproducing or reifying complete otherness in terms of Middle Eastern women's still existing sexual, racial, and social otherness within and outside their own culture. For instance, to take part in these imperial languages might nourish the already ruling new type of cultural imperialism which is less visible than the more conventional type of imperialism, but more powerful and dominant (Taleb 2002: 55). Post-colonial writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe are major examples of writers who have abandoned writing in the imperial language (i.e. English) despite their international fame as pioneering literary figures and examples of the empire writing back. Accordingly, to escape to another language, which in this case are languages of the colonial matrix of power, might bear another form of otherness for these Turkish female novelists. Indeed, both Shafak and Özdamar have experienced a certain degree of being labelled "other" within the Western (i.e. English and German) canon as writers from the margins, the Orient, and the "other" locus.

Özdamar's success with her novel *Life is a Caravanserai* (*Das Leben ist eine Karawanserai*, translated by Luise Von Flotow-Evans in 2000) in the 1991 Ingeborg Bachmann-Prize Competition at first also appeared to be a victory for a German jury who chose its first non-native speaker of German for the primary award. However, Ela Eylem Gezen, professor of German Studies, emphasizes that Özdamar's victory resulted in heated controversies, and "it was considered a scandal that a non-native speaker of German — a category of authors that was excluded until 1991 from the competition — could win such a prestigious German literary prize" (2012: 106). Karen Jankowsky notes that critics at the time failed to see the big picture behind Özdamar's portrayal of Turkey and the two German states through the novel (1997: 262). Instead, "they have underscored the association of Turkey with a timeless, hermetically sealed country of "Oriental" fairy tales and have characterized Özdamar's writing as not so much the product of aesthetic skill, but of a naive and harmless storytelling" (Ibid.). For Chantelle Warner, "the implication is that Turkish writers like Turkish workers provide a valuable function in the German host society, but their participation status in only ever marginal and contingent" (2013: 38). Özdamar's award was given to her foreignness. Her novel's social relevance both to the Turkish and German socio-politics, and her authenticity in story telling was not really considered as a distinctive aesthetic strategy. Subsequently, in the English edition of *Mutterzunge* (*Mother Tongue*, 1994) Özdamar commented that, "I was accepted, but merely as a 'guest-writer'" (Jankowsky 1997: 261)

While Özdamar's choice of language is obviously related to her migratory and diasporic context, Shafak's is a voluntary nomad identity. Nevertheless, like Özdamar she has gone through questionable incidents and realized the stigma of the literary canon based on aesthetics and authenticity. Within the Turkish literary canon she is attacked for bringing back Ottoman words and for her fascination with mysticism and religion. When she started to write in English, suddenly she was accused of betraying her mother tongue. She described to *Hürriyet Daily News* the reactions towards her language choice in fiction writing:

> I wrote my most recent novel in English. Switching from writing in Turkish to writing fiction in English has been painful and challenging. I wrote with an instinctual resistance to a sense of loss, as if I had a phantom limb. And yet at the same time, I very much enjoyed writing in English because it gave me more space for ambiguity and flexibility. As soon as my novel was out in Turkey, I was extensively criticized for abandoning my native tongue, for committing some sort of a cultural betrayal. While my nationalist critics kept asking

> where would I now belong, “either to Turkish or to English literature?” I believe their question is wrongly and rigidly formulated. I believe it is possible to be “both… and…” instead of "either… or" in this world, or at least in the world of fiction. (February 2, 2005)

Surely, Shafak’s otherness is not limited to Turkish critics. Soon after her novels appeared on bestseller lists in Turkey and her fame exceeded the national (literary) borders with novels written in English, she realized that aesthetics was closely linked with politics. This very much echoes Mignolo and the criticism of decolonial artists grounded in modern/colonial aestheTics. In her *TED* speech of 2010 Shafak criticizes how the allegedly dominant Western literary world confines non-Western authors to a fuzzy category called “multicultural literature”. Shafak explains that non-Western writers are lumped together not because of their artistic styles or literary tastes, but because of their passports. As a matter of fact, “Multicultural writers are expected to tell real stories, not so much the imaginary. A function is attributed to fiction. In this way, not only the writers themselves, but also their fictional characters become the representatives of something larger” (*TED* 2010).

The important point to note is the implicit interplay between patriarchy and racism which previously Mignolo touched upon when identifying the “pillars of Eurocentric knowing, sensing, and believing” which sustain a structure of knowledge including language and aesthetics (2014: 206). Since Shafak is a female novelist from the Middle East, she is constantly reminded of the burden on her to represent the region’s assumed image, that is, the Orientalist imagery. When her first novel written in English came out in America, she heard an interesting remark from a literary critic who revealed to her that he liked the novel but wished it had been written in a different way. In the course of the conversation she realized that the critic was taking issue with her international characters within the novel, and when he implied that he would have preferred to see a manifestation of her own identity it became clear that, as Shafak puts it, “He was looking for a Turkish woman in the book because I happened to be one” (*TED* 2010). The novelist awakens to the truth of a literary world that is dominated by patriarchal and colonial hegemonies. Lastly, in her interview with *New Perspectives Quarterly* she fleshes out in brief what triggers these dichotomies:

> Part of the dilemma that I face is that there’s always a label, an identity, attached to you, especially when you’re coming from the Middle East and especially when you are a woman. If you are an Algerian woman novelist the expectation is you should be writing about the problems of being a woman in Algeria, period. Especially in America, function

> is attributed to fiction. The repressive and the progressive circles, I call them, because it's especially the progressive circles that have these expectations if you are coming from the so-called Third World. In the name of giving a voice to a suppressed sister they attach a national identity. And that identity walks ahead and the quality of your fiction follows behind. On the other hand the relationship between politics and aesthetics is very important. It's not black and white, like you either choose politics or aesthetics. If you choose the latter then political matters are not important for you and if you choose aesthetics, well, then the world of aesthetics is a luxury. If you are a writer coming from Afghanistan, do you have the luxury to question these literary traditions that people in New York discuss? It's dangerous when art becomes the property of a very selective minority in the Western world. The rest of us are excluded from that. So the matrimony between politics and aesthetics is quite important. ("Linguistic Cleansing" 2005)

The world of identity politics influences how stories circulate and are read. The pressure on non-Western authors is felt heavily, especially by women writers from the Muslim world. Shafak stresses that if a female novelist is coming from the Middle East it is her "Middle Eastern female novelist" identity which walks ahead rather than the authenticity and quality of her fiction within a Western dominated literary world:

> If you're a woman writer from the Muslim world, like me, then you are expected to write the stories of Muslim women and, preferably, the unhappy stories of unhappy Muslim women. You´re expected to write informative, poignant and characteristic stories and leave the experimental and avant-garde to your Western colleagues. (*TED* 2010)

Burdened with their non-Western background which gets in the way of their aesthetic perceptions, both Özdamar and Shafak, as decolonial feminist Maria Lugones would put it, "retain the sense of tension between dehumanization and 'paralysis of coloniality of being' on the one hand, and the 'creativity activity of being,' on the other" (quoted in Tlostanova 2010: 45).

As I previously suggested, the term "nomadic avant-garde", inspired by Hannah Arendt's article "We Refugees", seems to apply a lot to these Turkish female novelists. As Giorgio Agamben in an essay on Arendt's argues, even fifty years later Arendt's analysis has not lost its up-to-dateness (1995). Today the refugee category of Arendt includes all sorts of immigrants, 'guest workers' of industrialized states, the expelled Palestinians in no-man's-land, and currently the Eastern European immigrants' mobilization through the European states. Agamben states that all these alleged refugee images should encourage nation-states to "call into question the very principle of the inscription of nativity and the trinity of state/nation/territory which is based on it" (Ibid.).

The debate both decolonial theorists and particularly decolonial feminists like Maria Lugones highlight revolves around what Agamben calls "the right to have rights

[...] In the nation-state system, the so-called sacred and inalienable rights of man prove to be completely unprotected at the very moment it is no longer possible to characterize them as rights of the citizens of a state" (Ibid.). The foremost feature of nationalism which is intertwined with modernism and secularism is to advocate egalitarianism. Nevertheless, the revolutionary terms "Liberté, égalité, fraternité", as scholar of sociology Daniele Conversi highlights, in reality uphold the opposite, "servility, inequality and conflict" (2012: 25). Besides, the colonial question is out of context within these terms. Conversi stresses the mythical term "equality" of the nation-states which "is largely fictitious and, once seized by the state, the concept is usually usurped to promote more demanding and surreptitious forms of inequality" (Ibid.). The meanings of concepts like equality and liberty evolve considerably with the expansion of ideology: by stretching the term ideology, new ground will be covered and "expanded to illuminate the shifting meaning of discursive practices" (2012: 17). Thus, with reference to Arendt, the "avant-garde" who come out as the protagonist of the "paradigm of a new historical consciousness" would open the colonial wound, engage in border thinking, and be conscious of the hegemonic Western-based epistemology that colonizes our knowledge and perceptions.

In the meantime, it is no coincidence that I have labelled Shafak and Özdamar "avant-gardes". Özdamar herself migrated to Germany as a guest worker in 1965 and worked in a factory in West Berlin until 1967. She then returned to Turkey to study drama. Unfortunately, with the military coup many theatres were closed, and even certain books related to socialist and Islamist literature were banned. She then left Turkey to live in Germany again. During her stay in Turkey she briefly got arrested due to the reports she wrote after coup (Ergin 2009: 88). In an interview with the local newpaper *Milliyet Sunday* she describes her feelings at the time:

> The theatre where I worked in the 1970s closed. In this period every day I read Brecht's poems aloud, listened to his songs. […] My dream […] was to work at his theatre with a student of his. As if I wanted to take my sick Turkish words into the sanatorium of a poet. Brecht is a great poet; I thought that his words would heal my words. I took the train with my sick words and came to Berlin. (2007b: 5)

While living in Germany she wrote the award-winning novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei: hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus (Life is a Caravanserai: Has Two Doors I Came in One I Went out The Other)* (1992). Nevertheless, debates and criticisms that criticized her novel for being naive in terms of

narrative exposed the exclusion and inclusion paradox through ethnic and gender labels. Özdamar was already aware of the national identity myth, which is why she wrote in *Mother Tongue* (1994) that she was accepted into German literary circles, "but merely as a guest writer" (Jankowsky 1997: 261). The "guest writer" within Özdamar's sentence implies the guest worker position of Turks — which was once also true for Özdamar —, a label they are burdened with even if they live in Germany for several decades and receive citizenship.

Eventually, Özdamar with her literary stance, language choice and diasporic experience appears to be very similar to Anzaldua's "mestiza consciousness". While referring to Anzaldua's writing and her search for her tongue (i.e. language), Mignolo characterizes her search as an inscription of language on her body (2012: 260). Thus, Özdamar's physical journey between Germany and Turkey is also a metaphorical journey that crosses mythical borders constructed by modern nation-states, which can be seen as an allusion to Hannah Arendt's refugee avant-garde. Furthermore, the narrative she chooses can be termed a literal translation, since she literally translates Turkish idioms into German and also uses Arabic prayers in her texts. Like Anzaldua, Özdamar "looks at borders as the places where the distinction between inside and the foreign collapse" (Ibid.).

On the other hand, Shafak's standpoint as an avant-garde, a border dweller like Özdamar, bears similarities in terms of changing the traditional concepts of national literature and language. Though harshly criticized for it, she is one of the pioneering female novelist who breaks aesthetic norms. Shafak is a daring writer who based her novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) on the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian genocide. Following the publication of the novel, she was accused of insulting Turkishness and faced trial for it. Richard Lea, at the time, wrote that the charges opened up new ground as Shafak was not "accused of 'insulting Turkishness' because of her campaigning journalism or her academic work, but for remarks made by a fictional character in her latest novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul*" (*The Guardian* July 24, 2006). Shafak openly refuses to use refined Turkish in her novels written in Turkish. Instead, she uses words of Arabic, Persian, and Sufi origin which were banned from the purified Turkish language in 1932. She relates the charges she faced to two reasons:

> The overt reason is my latest novel and the critical tone of the book. The latent reason is deeper and more complex. I have been active and outspoken on various 'taboo' issues, critical of ultranationalism and all sorts of rigid ideologies, including those coming from the Kemalist elite, and I have maintained a public presence on minority rights, especially on the Armenian question. It is a whole package. (*The Guardian* 2006)

Thus, both writers' choice of language is more than what it seems, as they by way of their literary stance attempt to resist the hegemonic official narrative and its tools 'secularism' and 'modernism' in Turkey. This indirectly leads a criticism against the dominant "white Turkish" feminist discourse, which I argue is a step towards a decolonial thinking and understanding. As Mignolo puts it:

> Once you take this step, even if you have not acquired these knowledges and understandings as a member of an Indigenous or Afro-Caribbean culture, or any other non-Western culture and civilization, if you are of European descent and mixed blood, once you realize that you have also been colonized, that your mind, your body, your senses, your sight, your hearing have been modeled by the colonial matrix of power, that is, by its institutions, languages, music, art, literature, etc. - or what is the same as Western Civilization - you begin to "heal." The process of healing is that of becoming a decolonial subject, or "learning to be." ("Decolonial Options and Artistic/aestheSic Entanglements" 2014)

Eventually, as is obvious with Shafak and Özdamar's literary standpoint, the next step taken by the conscious avant-gardes is towards criticism and healing. Therefore, their choice of language in writing their novels cannot be perceived as submission to the colonial logic of power. In this case, Shafak and Özdamar's story writing can be taken as a resistant authorship within the context of decolonial aestheSis. Both novelists resist the forced assimilation and coloniality/modernity rhetoric of their mother tongue but they also resist the Western epistemology dominating their stories even though they are, paradoxically, written in the so-called colonial languages.

Chapter 4

Elif Shafak's *Bastard of Istanbul* Diasporic Subjectivities, Border Crossings and the Decolonial Imaginary

4.1. Introduction

> Once there was, once there was not. God's creatures were as plentiful as grains and talking too much was a sin, for you could tell what you should not remember and you could remember what you should not tell.
>
> Elif Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006)

Elif Shafak, author of *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), is not merely a well-known female Turkish author with novels published in more than 40 countries, she is also a columnist, ardent feminist, and active public commentator in Turkey. In an interview with Riada Ašimović Akyol, Shafak obliquely elaborates on the intense social and political atmosphere in the aftermath of the Gezi upheaval in 2013 which is regarded by many, like Shafak, as a turning point for the feminist paradigm and minorities in Turkey:

> Turkey's women are not passive. Long gone are the days when we used to believe we were a mass of undifferentiated individuals and everyone in Turkey had to automatically be a Turk. People can now say, or at least they do want to say, aloud, "I am an Alevi, I am a Kurd, I am an Armenian, I am Jewish, I am gay, I am a pacifist and so on." … The differences that were swept under the carpet in the name of uniformity are now visible and irrepressible. (*Al-Monitor*, January 2014)

Shafak has written numerous articles on the patriarchal, polarizing nationalist and ultra-secularist/modernist structure of the social imaginary in Turkey which underpin her literary works, especially *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) (from now on *BI*). Shafak has always problematized the Turkish way of imposing elitist secularism, namely laicism, which Nilüfer Göle terms "didactic secularism" with reference to the philosopher Ernest Gellner. Both Shafak and Göle consider "didactic secularism" a "moralistic and pedagogical, teaching and imposing a modern way of life" (Göle 1997: 49). But then they are particularly critical of the Turkish 'package' of modernization, westernization, and secularization and the gender specific essence and logic by which the female body has become a symbolic battleground, particularly after the demolition of the Ottoman Empire.

With the proclamation of Republican Turkey women, ethnically Turkish women were assigned the main role as the builders of a completely novel (i.e. modern) way of

living in both the private and the public spheres (Göle 1997: 51). Turkish women, as the representatives of this modern life, became visible in photographs "as unveiled women, women in athletic competitions, women pilots, women professionals, and women with men, both in European clothing" (Ibid.). Göle gives this as an example of a form of secularism that penetrates daily life and basically works on women's physical and social visibility (Ibid.). The term "penetration" makes perfect sense when Göle continues as follows:

> Even the body-language and the body-posture of the women portrayed were different from what they had been before the reforms. Advertisements, cartoons and novels depicted women in their fashionable short-cut hair styles, Western style dresses, using new consumer products, and posing with their husbands in homes decorated with Western style furniture, and in public places such as theatres, restaurants, tea-rooms and streets. The modern way of living was not limited to the acquisition of Western consumer products, but also included the appropriation of modern values such as healthy living, the education of children, and equality of the sexes. Women thus became the primary conveyors of this new way of living, both in the private and the public domains. (Ibid.)

Ninety years have now passed since the advent of Republican Turkey, which promised to bring with it the granting of suffrage to women and a fundamental alteration in the legal status of women. Despite these boasts, however, particular female identities (e.g. Kurdish, Alewite, and working class women) still remain substantially under-represented in both national and local politics, and we must therefore ask why.

The same question also applies to the most prominent so-called "transnational" Turkish feminist paradigms (i.e. liberal bourgeois and neo-Kemalist feminisms). Sedef Arat Koç claims that both feminisms merit the label "white Turk", since, "[they] see feminism as a modernizing and civilizational project" and have a colonizing perspective towards "other" women (2007: 49). Arat Koç elaborates on the "white Turk" feminist notion as follows:

> The discourses of whiteness that are implicitly or explicitly present in some of the dominant discourses in Turkish feminisms affect the capacity of these feminisms to reach across class, ethnicity, and regional and rural/urban differences, and to represent the different voices and interests of women differently and unequally situated in Turkish society; they also affect the capacity of Turkish feminists to engage in egalitarian, mutual, and inclusive transnational relationships with women's and feminist groups in the Middle East. (Ibid.)

Performing coalitional resistance, solidarity, and agency have not become the major goal of these Turkish feminist frameworks. Within this context, it is clear that Turkey is replete with cultural and racial clashes along with political confrontations that symbolically

employ the female body as a war-zone. Nevertheless, this is not the whole story which needs to be touched upon before I start my close-reading of Shafak's novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) which I put forward as a fictional response to the present impasse in Turkish feminism.

4.2. Turkish Feminism's Dissapointed Daughter: Elif Shafak and the Politics of Her Fiction

For more than a decade now Turkey has been ruled by a political party with clear Islamic roots and which intellectuals, the literary intelligentsia, and feminists like Elif Shafak have written articles on in order to express their endorsement of the positive policies which have highlighted issues like domestic violence against women and minority rights. Shafak even declared the government to be much more progressive than the pro-secular social democrats (*It Is Not Easy To Be A Turk*, May 2007). Not even a decade ago in 2007, more than 700,000 pro-secular Turkish citizens went out into the streets to protest against the constitutional changes regarding the presidential elections which would let people elect the president rather than the parliament itself. The political tension had increased with the nomination of Abdullah Gül for president and had agitated the pro-secular masses. Gül's Islamist identity and particularly his wife's head scarf was the focal point of the demonstrations which were apparent through signs carried like, "The roads to the presidential palace are closed to imams", and, "We do not want to see a covered First Lady".

According to Shafak, the foremost characteristic of the rallies was that female protesters were more numerous than male protesters. She interprets this as Turkish women's increasing activism in politics, but then continues as follows: "This is a quarrel about women and by women. Women's bodies and images are the sites in which big ideological battles take shape" (Ibid.). The most interesting and paradoxical aspect of these rallies worth mentioning is that many female protesters openly called for a coup d'etat. Thereupon, Nilüfer Göle in a newspaper article asks if army takeovers had softened and even feminized, that Turkish women had taken the role of the generals (*Radikal* May 1, 2007).

As a matter of fact, one must bear in mind that Turkish identity is constituted of conflicting characteristics and voices. A few months before the pro-Kemalist, pro-secular,

and pro-nationalist protests an outspoken Armenian journalist and close friend of Shafak, Hrant Dink, was assassinated by an ultra-nationalist young man. Dink became a target because of being "among a group of Armenian writers and intellectuals who sought, through discussion, to diffuse the tensions between the Armenian diaspora and Turkey" (Hilton 2010: 13). Besides being a close friend of Shafak, Dink was a significant character who inspired certain aspects of the novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006). However, both Shafak and Dink could not escape being charged under Article 301, a Turkish criminal code about insulting national identity.[8] Dink's prosecution derived from remarks at a conference on "Global Security, Terror and Human Rights, Multi-culturalism, Minorities and Human Rights," held in Şanlı Urfa, a south-eastern city. Dink had been asked about, "how he felt when at primary school, he had to, like all his fellow pupils, recite the words: 'I am a Turk, I am Honest, I am hardworking'. He had responded that, although he was honest and hardworking, he was not a Turk" (quoted in Hilton 2007: 13).

Coincidentally, Shafak's prosecution was initiated, tragicomically, when a nationalist lawyer, Kemal Kerinçsiz, filed a complaint in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district against Shafak because of the remarks which a fictional character in *The Bastard of Istanbul* had made about the Armenian deportations (Lea 2006). For Shafak, there were two main reasons why the charges were brought:

> The overt reason is my latest novel and the critical tone of the book. The latent reason is deeper and more complex. I have been active and outspoken on various 'taboo' issues, critical of ultranationalism and all sorts of rigid ideologies, including those coming from the Kemalist elite, and I have maintained a public presence on minority rights, especially on the Armenian question. It is a whole package. (Ibid.)

As Shafak writes in her contribution to *Turkey: Writers, Politics and Free Speech* (2010), a collection of *openDemocracy* articles published as a tribute to Dink, in her view Hrant Dink's death on 19 January 2007 triggered a shift within the society:

> Hrant was a dreamer, and as relentlessly as he was misunderstood, mistreated, and downtrodden because of this dominant aspect of his personality, by the end he knew very well that dreams are contagious. He gave us hope and faith, but most of all, he passed on his dreams to us. He made us believe that we the citizens of modern Turkey, as the grandchildren of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual Ottoman empire, could

[8] Up until 2008, the article criminalized "denigrating Turkishness". Reforms replaced "denigrating Turkishness" with "denigration of the 'Turkish nation, the state of the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish Parliament (TBMM), the government of the Republic of Turkey and the legal institutions of the state' and added the additional requirement of the authorisation of the Minister of Justice before prosecutors could initiate proceedings". Humanrightsturkey.org. Humanrights, 2013.Web. 5 Jan. 2015.

> and should live together without assimilating differences or erasing the memory of the past. (108)

Thus, with the conservative but somehow more democratic and liberal AKP government, state politics seemed to be progressing towards pluralism, more women's rights, and the so-called recognition of political organizations. In particular, Turkey's candidacy for EU membership led to the shaping and reshaping of women's rights and gender equality. Impressive legislation on women was brought forth, for instance in May 2011 the government "signed Turkey on to a new Council of Europe Convention on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The government passed a Labor Law in 2008 promising state contributions towards Social Security costs for female employees for five years" (Sussman 2011). On the basis of these socio-political changes, Shafak wrote an article in *The Guardian*, "Turkey opens its eyes to domestic violence", writing that:

> University students are marching on the streets, women's organisations are collecting signatures. Through blogs, websites, magazines, fanzines, panels and conferences, activists are raising their voices, singers give concerts to honour women who have been victims of killings, writers and poets condemn the violence openly and contest it with their words. (August 2011)

However, as Shafak emphasizes, "all this is not enough" (Ibid.). Today, there are still few doors for victims of domestic and sexual violence to knock on, and very few shelters to protect these women. As Berna Akel points out in her study, *Women's Shelters and Municipalities in Turkey: Between Solidarity and Benevolence* (2011: 4), "Shelters in Turkey do not mainly represent feminist solidarity but stand as bureaucratic institutions". Similarly, Anna Louie Sussman writes that according to the Human Rights Watch report, "Only eight percent of women who have experienced abuse bother seeking help from any institution. Many of those who did go to the police reported that the police sent them back to their abuser, insisting that their problems were a family affair" ("Why Turkey is Backsliding on Women's Rights" 2011). Sussman problematizes the government's backsliding on women's rights with its increasingly patriarchal rhetoric which seems to reassign to women their traditional roles in society (Ibid.).

Despite its failure with women's rights, the so-called "Islamic-oriented" government (i.e. the AKP) was the first to realize the urgency for a Kurdish-Turkish peace process that started in 2012 (Rubin 2005). According to an Amnesty International's report it is stated that the current government has made limited progressed in allowing

"previously taboo subjects to be discussed more freely, such as criticism of the army, discussion of the position of minorities in Turkey and whether the massacres of Armenians in 1915 constitute genocide …" (March 2013).

Notwithstanding all the political and social developments purportedly carried out by the government (i.e. regarding women's rights and minority politics), their darker side had yet to become apparent. This changed when they began to target women's role within the public and private spheres. Political confrontations and cultural clashes started to heat up, and the female body once again became a symbolic battleground. Regarding the stubbornly male-dominated politics, scholars like Zeynep Gambetti argue that this U-turn should be explained in terms of neo-liberal socio-economic restructuring put into practice by the current government. She warns us not to see this allegedly conservative neo-liberal structure as a pure imposition of an Islamist world-view upon the political, cultural, and social spheres of life (*Gazete Vatan* April 5, 2011). For Gambetti, the current government's vision is highly similar to the Kemalist ideology that attributes to the female body the role of being the primary representative of progress. She argues that the employment of the female body as a vehicle has a long in Turkey and adds that it was not even different within the Turkish Leftist movement.

Furthermore, Gambetti swiftly adds that the speeches of prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan which urge women to give birth to at least three children coincide with a similar rhetoric which can also be found in Europe (Ibid.). For instance, as *The Guardian* reported, in 2005 the French government proposed policies to increase the fertility rate: "Middle-class mothers in France could be paid up to €1,000 (£675) a month - almost the minimum wage - to stop work for a year and have a third child under a government scheme to boost the birthrate" (*Guardian* September 22, 2005). Accordingly, Selin Çağatay, a member of the Socialist Feminist Collective which was founded in 2008, writes that, "A growing number of women's organizations are now mobilized around issues of violence, employment, education and cultural rights. Yet, most of these organizations are being co-opted into state structures by means of an outpouring of funds provided by the EU and other transnational institutions" (2014). For Çağatay, this leads to unfavourable results for the Turkish feminist paradigm:

> Feminists who adopted the language of the global (and highly unequal) gender equality regime ended up detaching "men" as perpetrators of women's oppression from their

> analysis of patriarchy. While men's appropriation of women's labor was no longer openly problematized, the implementation of policies to increase women's employment and projects targeting women's entrepreneurship were uncritically supported by mainstream feminist groups. Moreover, activists' dependency on external funding weakened both their ability to organize and political independence. ("Challenging Conservative Neoliberalism in Turkey" 2014)

All this tension regarding women's role within Turkish society, on which Shafak has written and spoken in several newspapers, interviews, and so on, along with other increasingly authoritarian and un-democratic practices imposed by the government resulted in the so-called "epic resistance" of the Gezi Park protests in 2013. During the Gezi protest Shafak took to the stage as an outspoken critic of the government's increasingly authoritarian and anti-feminist policies that reinforced "marriage, reproductive, motherhood, homemaker, and nurturing functions for women" (Ernhart 2013: 301). According to Konda, a research and consultancy company, more than half of the participants were women (June 5, 2014). The predominance of women within the anti-government protests was not unexpected given how govenrment policies had been threatening women's welfare.

Gezi resistance can be viewed as a milestone for the Turkish feminist framework in escaping the impasse and embracing and representing difference. Tuğçe Ellialtı emphasizes that, "Gezi has provided feminists with the opportunity to reconsider the relation of feminism to other oppositional ideologies and social movements (e.g., environmentalism) and to revisit feminism's political priorities" (*CritCom* 2014). Nevertheless, one wonders if Gezi really has produced an epistemic shift, particularly with regard to a Turkish feminist paradigm representing solidarity, or is it just an example of the self-colonizing and bourgeois 'tolerance' towards difference rather than the actual acceptance of it?

It is true that feminist resistance through the Gezi protests consisted of a heterogeneous community with a variety of ideologies which certainly gave hope about a shifting feminist perspective. Nevertheless, as Shafak herself wrote in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, "Nothing brought people together more swiftly and strongly – though transiently and shakily – than a shared enemy" (2007: 113). There is a popular Turkish saying, *düşmanımın düşmanı benim dostumdur* – "My enemy's enemy is my friend". That women from various social, economical, and ethnic classes came together and resisted

the government does not mean that they were acting in solidarity, which would be wishful thinking. As Itır Erhart writes in her piece entitled "Biopolitics and the Gezi Protests" (2013: 302):

> The bodies of women became totems of the protests. Photographs of the iconic women in red dress, and of other young women standing in front of a water cannons were widely shared both on mainstream and social media. Resisting women were named 'Miss Turkey 2013', and the "most beautiful" among all. The pictures of women who do not fit the type, i.e., female protestors with hairdos and high heels who are expected to be apolitical and women with headscarves who are expected to be bowing to Erdoğan's authority, were among the most frequently shared images.

To share contrasting images and draw bold lines between those acceptable female models and "the others" is another way of reproducing forms of binaries. Furthermore, homogenizing and labeling these women, that is, the priviliged status of enunciating a form of knowledge that applies specific features to groups of women, can be explained as the coloniality of gender. To recap on this term briefly with reference to Chapter One, the notion "coloniality of gender" was coined by the feminist scholar Maria Lugones who argues for a decolonial feminist approach which dwells in a different epistemic zone. Rather than "studying" or "theorizing" women from different social, cultural, and racial backgrounds, the decolonial feminist approach struggles for a political and an epistemic stance that goes together with a decolonial shift in knowledge production (Tlostanova 2010: 35). Furthermore, it aspires to the decolonization of imperialist and colonialist "impositions of the Western gender discourses and systems on non-Western people" (Van den Brandt 2014: 23). I will explore this approach in furhter detail below.

In a report published by *Jadaliyya* on the "Talk Turkey" conference entitled, "Rethinking Life Since Gezi", Zeyno Üstün observes how patriarchal discourses exercized domination over the female body throughout the protests. She argues that female idols of the Gezi resistance, like 'Woman in Red' and 'Woman in Black', "Were promoted as 'brave, beautiful women' and projected as the desired modern subjects of the nation" (*Rethinking Gezi Through Feminist and LGBT Perspectives* 2011). While the contribution of these female images was significant, "This fascination also points to a patriarchal approach, reproducing the discourse which dwells upon fear, highlighting the fragile and beautiful female body, and even reminding us of the good old republican mythology of women and their courage during the war years" (Ibid.). Another article by Harriet Fitch Little likewise critically considers the image of the 'Woman in Red', whom

she depicts as "the academic-cum-pin-up girl" (*New Statesman* June 13, 2013). Fitch Little reveals her concerns about the danger of iconography through the upheaval:

> Is there anything wrong with a healthy dose of rousing iconography? Maybe not, but having spent time in the now dismantled Gezi Park occupation, it's hard not to wonder whether the potency of its female symbols wasn't at best a distraction, at worst an obstruction, when trying to grasp the impact women really made. (Ibid.)

If we go back to Itır Erhart's article on the biopolitics of the Gezi protest, we realize that these iconic female images led to the emergence of counter-images. Both the acceptable female image (e.g. Woman in Red) and the apolitical (e.g. protestor with high heels and hairdos) and unacceptable women (e.g. veiled and pro-government) are imprisoned and stuck within specific images which undermine the reality of significant heterogeneity that characterizes both groups. Thus, in a symbolic sense the images of Turkish feminisms resisting and intersecting and interacting with different selves through the Gezi upheaval did very little to erase the marginalizing, anti-Islam, and anti-Kurdish hysteria of the Kemalist ideology.

The revival of Kemalist images on flags and banners carried by a growing number of protestors, particularly women, proved once again the underlying problem of a failure of solidarity, of coalition building, and of the recognition of differences. The Kemalist ideology, strictly based on a package that enforces Turkification, modernization, secularization, and also westernization, should not be applied as a counter-discourse against the oppressive, highly patriarchal rhetoric and hegemonic demands of the "neo-Islamist" government that made excessive use of the state apparatus (e.g. tear gas and rubber bullets) during the Gezi demonstrations (Keyder 2004). Turkish feminism has to fight against *both* the hegemonic patterns of representations implemented by the former Kemalist, secularist, and modernist regime *and* the strictly conservative demands of the current government. However, with the unquestionable revival of Kemalist images in the protests one can see the ignorance which exists regarding the estrangement of specific communities within Turkey. For instance, the Kemalist discourse is a primary source of the estrangement of Kurdish women, as Metin Yüksel writes:

> This estrangement and marginalization was the result of a combination of two dimensions of Kemalist policies: the dismantling of Kurdish ethnic identity concomitant with the 'emancipation' of 'Turkish' women. As a result of this process, Kurdish women became doubly marginalized primarily because on the one hand their ethnic identity was severely crushed and on the other hand they became relatively disadvantaged and underprivileged

> compared to their Turkish counterparts who were potentially able to benefit from the secularizing and modernizing Republican reform. (2006: 777)

On the other hand, Welat Zeydanlıoğlu, founder and coordinator of the Kurdish Studies Network, touches upon a hysteria of the Kemalist ideology as follows:

> The Kemalists took on what I call the "White Turkish Man's Burden" in order to carry out a civilising mission on a supposedly backward and traditional Anatolian society enslaved by the retrograde influence of Islam. By assuming the Orientalist narrative and re-enacting it in the form of a Turkish Orientalism "indigenous" to Turkey, the Turkish ruling elite negated the Ottoman past for its "backwardness" and "religiosity". The Kemalists rejected the Orient and assigned to Islam the definition of Orientalness, thus equating westernisation with de-Islamisation. (2008: 4)

With such a deepened hysteria due to the Kemalist discourse, especially influential on women, it is not that surprising then that the feminist uprising through Gezi could not excite a wider range of women.

Coalition building, embracing differences, cherishing the visibility of women from different communities such as the Kurds, Alawites, and Islamists, and expressing solidarity without colonizing the different can only come into existence if Turkish women, feminist activists, and theorists work to create an epistemic shift. As Nira Yuval Davis puts it:

> All feminist politics should be viewed as a form of coalition politics in which the differences among women are recognized and given a voice, in and outside the political 'units' and the boundaries of this coalition should be set not in terms of 'who' we are but in terms of what we want to achieve. (1997: 126)

In *Women, Citizenship and Difference* (1997: 9), Yuval Davis writes that there exists an "institutionalized recognition of social solidarity within the political community of the citizens" which is "being threatened by a variety of groupings, ethnic, racial, religious and sexual sub-collectivities which exist within the marginal matrix of society and 'which experience informal and formal discrimination consonant with their credited lower social worth' (Evans 1993: 6)". In fact, this sort of solidarity engenders privileged solidarity, which homogenizes women.

Therefore, Yuval Davis proposes transversal feminist politics (Yuval-Davis 1994, 1997, 2006; Cockburn and Hunter 1999), "In which the specific positioning of political actors is recognized and considered" on the basis of coalition building (1997: 19). With reference to black feminists like Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Italian feminists like

Raphaela Lambertini and Elizabetta Dominini she goes on to portray this feminist approach as follows:

> This approach is based on the epistemological recognition that each positioning produces specific situated knowledge which cannot be but an unfinished knowledge, and therefore dialogue among those differentially positioned should take place in order to reach a common perspective. Transversal dialogue should be based on the principle of remaining centred in one's own experiences while being empathetic to the differential positionings of the partners in the dialogue, thus enabling the participants to arrive at a different perspective from that of hegemonic tunnel vision. The boundaries of the dialogue would be determined, as Hill Collins has argued (1990), by the message rather than its messengers. The result of the dialogue might still be differential projects for people and groupings positioned differently, but their solidarity would be based on a common knowledge sustained by a compatible value system. The dialogue, therefore, is never boundless. (Ibid.)

This way, solidarity would be performed on grounds of difference that indeed prioritizes difference with regard to social positionings. Accordingly, transversal politics is known to be "based on a dialogical standpoint epistemology" (van den Brandt 2014: 22). Yuval Davis' feminist coalition-building model "proves challenging and encourages feminist scholars and activists to move beyond the impasse of the discussions about identity politics. It argues for the importance of achieving acceptance and inclusion of difference within coalition work" (van den Brandt 2014: 23). Thus, it aspires to a solidarity that, contrary to many feminist coalitions (e.g. the feminist uprising in Gezi), which undergo a backlash due to their hierarchical epistemological structure, this approach to coalition-building is premised on "dialogue and the continuous process of rooting and shifting — meaning the awareness of being rooted within the own identity and membership of particular communities and the act of placing oneself in a situation of exchange with women from different backgrounds and identities" (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, Yuval Davis' model of tranversal politics is highly criticized for not "rethinking the problems of power inequality between women in coalition building" in-depth (Ibid.). Accordingly, van den Brandt writes, with reference to Nyhagen-Predelli and Halsaa (2012), that:

> When it comes to feminist solidarity among women of different ethnic, cultural, and/or religious backgrounds, issues of inequality regarding voice, visibility, recognition, resources, social advantages and privileges on the intersections of gender, ethnicity and religion pose serious barriers for collaboration for a common cause. (Ibid.)

Therefore, this approach to feminist coalition-building may harbor a potential danger of privileged solidarity which can lead to a new version of power relationships.

In this connection I would like to touch upon the feminist activist Houria Bouteldja, the founder and spokesperson of the Party of the Indigenous of the Republic (indigenes-republique) in France, who discusses "privileged solidarity" in-depth. Bouteldja gave a speech at the 4th International Congress of Islamic Feminism where she discussed privileged solidarity. Solidarity is a subconcept of recognition in that one must first recognize difference in order to form any kind of prosperous solidarity. In this context, tolerance comes to the fore as a tricky notion as there is great potential for it to be exploited, much like solidarity. In her speech, Bouteldja explained the point as follows:

> In 2007, women from the Movement of the Indigenous of the Republic took part in the annual 8th of March demonstration in support of women's struggles. At that time, the American campaign against Iran had begun. We decided to march behind a banner that's message was "No feminism without anti-imperialism". We were all wearing Palestinian kaffiyehs and handing out flyers in support of three resistant Iraqi women taken prisoner by the Americans. When we arrived, the organizers of the official procession started chanting slogans in support of Iranian women. We found these slogans extremely shocking given the ideological offensive against Iran at that time. Why the Iranians, the Algerians and not the Palestinians and the Iraqis? Why such selective choices? To thwart these slogans, we decided to express our solidarity not with Third World women but rather with Western women. And so we chanted:
>
> …
>
> Solidarity with German women!
>
> Solidarity with English women!
>
> …
>
> Which meant: why should you, white women, have the privilege of solidarity? You are also battered, raped, you are also subject to men's violence, you are also underpaid, despised, your bodies are also instrumentalized… (2010)

Bouteldja's speech exposes the exploitative potential of notions like solidarity as a result of the universalized acceptance of white privilege of solidarity and tolerance.

Within this context, I would like to emphasize on a research entitled "Feminist Solidarity: Possibility of Feminism in Solidarity Practices" (2009) that elaborates on the impasse of Turkish feminist framework goes through in terms of recognizing differences and solidarity. In general, this work problematizes the Turkish feminist framework and the transnational "white Turk" feminist paradigms (i.e. liberal bourgeois and neo-Kemalist feminisms) as a whole for failures of solidarity. For Astarcıoğlu, confronting a backlash with regard to solidarity is a consequence of the "politics of identity, political orientations, ethnic origins, religious views" (2009: 108). Nevertheless, what really

"prevents feminists from establishing solidarity is not their differences, but instead their impatience with differences and polyphony" (Ibid.). The study is mainly based on interviews with Turkish feminist activists, and they are all asked to define "solidarity". Sibel Astarcıoğlu Bilginer realizes that, "[the respondents'] understanding of feminist solidarity is built explicitly upon commonality rather than difference" (2009: 65). Furthermore, "Difference among women is hardly mentioned to be the source of feminist solidarity although respect for difference is mentioned by some" (Ibid.).

Based on all these studies on the Gezi protest and the feminist uprising that occurred during it and the coalition-building feminist epistemology promoted by scholars like Yuval Davis, it might be better to emphasize the "decolonial imaginary" and so decolonial feminism instead of the modernized, colonized, and secularized social imaginary of the Turkish feminist paradigm.

The decolonial feminist approach "emphasizes the necessity of a decolonial perspective in order to make coalitions across power-invested differences sustainable... [as a result] a common feminist cause, then, is not enough" (van den Brandt 2014: 23). Maria Lugone and Madina Tlostanova refer to the colonial matrix of power, which is linked with Western hegemony and its logic of coloniality (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 2). The colonial matrix of power works through the "formation of race (racism), the control of labor (capitalism), the control of subjectivity (including gender), and the control of knowledge production (or a Western monopoly of knowledge)" (Tlostanova 2010: 20). Decolonial feminism provokes the overcoming of the 'coloniality of gender', aspiring to the decolonization of imperialist and colonialist "impositions of the Western gender discourses and systems on non-Western people" (van den Brandt 2014: 23). For Lugones, decolonial feminism basically "offers a mixed analysis of the categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality, which allows including more people who otherwise remain excluded because they stand at the crossings of various aspects of discrimination" (2010 41).

A similar position has been taken by prominent third world and women of color feminist scholars like Kumari Jajawardena (1986), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) and Chela Sandoval (2000). However, the main problem in questioning the privilege of intellectual asymmetry and the homogenization and essentialization of a myriad of non-

Western female identities usually lies in perceiving colonial modernities on the basis of "the mythic opposition of modernity and tradition, on developmentalist paradigm and stagist approach" (Tlostanova 2010: 7). Tlostanova explains the "stagist approach" as an "implicit belief that third world feminism is stuck at some earlier national stage, already unimportant for the West, and therefore is limited" (Ibid.). On the basis of such a decolonialist approach Tlostanova argues that though scholars like Mohanty and M. Jacqui Alexander manifest an "ideal of transborder participatory democracy remains extremely viable", it requires "a deeper epistemic radicalization and delinking from the rhetoric of modernity, including a rupture with an outdated opposition of socialism and capitalism" (2010: 13), because, for decolonialist thinkers, socialism is also "one of the varients of Western modernity's rhetoric of salvation and liberation against the will" (2010: 12). That is, there is no rejection of the rhetoric of modernity altogether in Mohanty's or Alexander's and many other third world feminist scholars' feminist positionings, and so they mainly remain within the logic of modernity (Ibid.). This is where decolonial feminism differs from traditional feminist approaches and is therefore a more applicable epistemic positioning in observing the pitfalls of the Turkish feminist paradigm. Within this highly hegemonic social imaginary a myriad of subjectivities, communities, cultures, and belief systems inherited from the Ottoman period have been suppressed, alienated, and even exposed to the colonial strategies of the Turkish nation-state.

Taking Turkish history into account, these experiences of othering, objectifying, and so victimizing that continue in different forms today is not a result of Western colonialism. In fact, as decolonial feminist thinkers emphasize, it is a consequence of "the coloniality of gender" or the "modern/colonial gender system" which is an attempt to connect women of color feminism with the decolonial notion of the "coloniality of power" (Tlostanova 2010). The term "coloniality" is explained by Ramón Grosfoguel, following Anibal Quijano (1991, 1993, 1998), as follows:

> I use 'coloniality' to address 'colonial situations' in the present period in which colonial administrations have almost been eradicated from the capitalist world-system. By 'colonial situations' I mean the cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racialized/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations. ("Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality" 2008)

Linked to this approach, Lugones applies the notion "coloniality" to her own feminist approach. But unlike Quijano's coloniality which considers the capitalist world system of power, Lugones' decolonial feminist analysis complicates his critique. Thus she writes:

> In thinking of the coloniality of gender, I complicate his own understanding of gender only in terms of sexual access to women. In using the term *coloniality* I mean to name not just a classification of people in terms of the coloniality of power and gender, but also the process of active reduction of people, the dehumanization that fits them for the classification, the process of subjectification, the attempt to turn the colonized into less than human beings. (2010: 745)

With reference to Lugones' concept "the coloniality of gender", Tlostanova would emphasize the following:

> It would be incorrect to regard the modern colonial gender system as merely a circulation of power, organizing the private sphere, the access to sexuality and the control of sexuality and demography. This would lead to biologization of gender and neglecting of its epistemic, cognitive side, of knowledge instead of nature. (Tlostanova 2010: 41)

In this context, the hierachical dichotomy embodied in the modern/colonial gender system is one of the main reasons why prominent Turkish feminist paradigms face a conceptual and practical impasse. That is, the Turkish feminist framework never critically examines the dominance of the proper middle class, westernized, secularized, and modernized Turkish female citizen over the Kurdish, Anatolian, Armenian, and so on female subjectivities. Thus, the Turkish social imaginary, implemented by the Kemalist elite and employing a Eurocentric rhetoric, prevails in its hegemonic status even today. As a result, while a decolonial feminist approach seems quite applicable to highlighting the impasse, the decolonial imaginary comes to the fore as an alternative to the oppressive Turkish social imaginary. Thus, I would argue that there is a profound interplay between the decolonial feminist perspective and the decolonial imaginary, particularly in uncovering silenced voices and hidden identities.

This decolonial concept is closely connected to the colonial/imperial difference explored by Walter Mignolo, who defines it as follows: "The colonial difference brings the concept of civilization back to the modern/colonial world system where the notion was invented and where it serves as a powerful tool in rebuilding its imaginary" (2012: 278). Accordingly, the colonial difference is the missing link between civizilization, globalization, and so the modern/colonial world system (Ibid.). Mignolo briefly depicts the colonial difference on the basis of the modern/colonial imaginary as follows:

> The colonial difference is the space where *local* histories inventing and implementing global designs meet *local* histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the planet. If Western cosmology is the historically unavoidable reference point, the multiple confrontations of two kinds of local histories defy dichotomies. Christian and Native American cosmologies, Christian and Amerindian cosmologies, Christian and Islamic cosmologies, Christian and Confucian cosmologies among others only enact dichotomies where you look at them one at a time, not when you compare them in the geohistorical confines of modern/ colonial world system. (2012: ix)

In addition to the colonial difference which is established within the structure of the colonial matrix of power, we also need to consider the close interplay between colonial difference and imperial difference. Constructed on the same principle as colonial difference, imperial difference comes to the fore as an assertion of the superiority of imperial hegemony: "The imperial difference recognizes the similar but immediately reduces it to a second-class empire by extending to it the features of the colonial difference" (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012: 42). In this way, both the Russian and the Ottoman Empire "were inferior in terms of religion and language" (Ibid.). As a result, Tlostanova and Mignolo argue that while both notions (i.e. colonial and imperial difference) have been established on similar principles, imperial difference "was applied to sociohistorical configurations that were not reduced to colonies" (Ibid.).

In this context, Lugones suggests that we view coloniality, namely the coloniality of power, and colonial difference along with imperial difference as posing a critique of Eurocentricism (2010: 751). Thus, the decolonial feminists' task is to situate themselves in the fractured locus of thinking about concrete, lived experiences and seeing/recognizing the colonial/imperial differences. Van den Brandt (2014: 24) argues that Lugones and Yural-Davis differ in conceptualizing their feminist perception based on the recognition of difference and coalition-building: "Where Yuval-Davis argues for the necessity of the inclusion of difference through dialogue and the process of rooting and shifting, Lugones (2010) asks us to think of *how* we deal with the power inequalities involved. Decolonial feminism puts an emphasis on politics of location and a maximal sense of responsibility and methodologies that work with our own lives". Lugones calls for a decolonial feminist coalition-building which would overcome the power-invested borders of myriad differences (i.e. racial, cultural, religious, ethnic). Therefore, Lugones proposes that we think and inhabit the fractured locus where these differences pop up and

which provides us with creative ways to unlearn Eurocentric ways of thinknig and to re-learn "other" ways:

> From the fractured locus, the movement succeeds in retaining creative ways of thinking, behaving, and relating that are antithetical to the logic of capital. Subject, relations, ground and possibilities are continually transformed, incarnating a weave from the fractured locus that constitutes as creative, peopled recreation. Adaptation, rejection, adoption, ignoring, and integrating are never just modes in isolation of resistance as they are always performed by an active subject thickly constructed by inhabiting the colonial difference with a fractured locus. I want to see the multiplicity in the fracture of the locus: both the enactment of the coloniality of gender and the resistance response from a subaltern sense of self, of the social, of the self-in-relation, of the cosmos, all grounded in a peopled memory. Without the tense multiplicity, we see only either the coloniality of gender as accomplishment, or a freezing of memory, an ossified understanding of self in relation from a precolonial sense of the social. Part of what I see is tense movement, people moving: the tension between the dehumanization and paralysis of the coloniality of being, and the creative activity of be-ing. (2010: 754)

Emma Pérez deconstructs hierarchical and normative models of emancipation of women from various communities and proposes an inbetween space very much like the fractured locus Lugones touches upon, namely the decolonial imaginary:

> If we are dividing history into these categories —colonial relations, postcolonial relations, and so on — then, I would like to propose a decolonial imaginary as a rupturing space, the alternative to that which is written in history. I think that the decolonial imaginary is that time lag between the colonial and postcolonial, that interstitial space where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated. The decolonial imaginary is intangible to many because it acts much like a shadow in the dark. It survives as a faint outline gliding against a wall or an object. The shadow is the figure between the subject and the object on which it is cast, moving and breathing through an in-between space. Bhabha writes, "It is not the colonialist self or the colonized Other, but the disturbing distance inbetween that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness". I would change his colonial otherness to *decolonizing* otherness. The historian's political project, then, is to write a history that decolonizes otherness. (1999: 6)

Though Pérez's intention is to put emphasis on the decolonization of problematic, namely Eurocentric and so hegemonic, ways of feminist thinking that impose fixed and hierarchical categories on Chicana women, her perception of "decolonizing otherness" applies *mutatis mutandis* to the questionable format of the present-day Turkish feminist framework based on solidarity, coalition-building, and cherishing differences. As I have highlighted several times, the prominent "white Turk" feminist framework is entangled with dichotomies such as modern/backward, liberated/oppressed, secular/religious, and particularly the promoting of normative Turkish subjectivity versus "others" (i.e. ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities) highly resembles the theoretical, practical, and political

impasse experienced by feminist perspectives that cannot escape power-invested differences/categories.

In this context, I argue that Elif Shafak comes to the fore as a Turkish feminist since through her novels, particularly *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), we witness a decolonial feminist task in practice. The feminist and decolonial standpoint in Shafak's authorship uncovers suppressed epistemologies, memories, cosmologies, and, in particular, a myriad of subjectivities. Through her narrative she critically hints at the patriarchal, polarizing nationalist and ultra-secularist/modernist structure of the social imaginary in Turkey which also underpins the unconscious of her other literary works like *The Gaze* (2006) and *Honour* (2012). Shafak has always problematized Turkish nationalism, the Turkish way of imposing elitist secularism, namely laicism, and the Eurocentric modernism which came with the advent of the Kemalist regime. As I argued earlier, these social and political apparatuses have produced discourses of whiteness and self-colonialism/self-orientalism which later on implicitly or explicitly influenced the dominant Turkish feminist framework.

Taking all these into account, I argue that with her novel Elif Shafak attempts to take on the responsiblity through fiction of unveiling the colonial and imperial differences which the decolonial feminist paradigm promotes. Through the lenses of decolonial feminist thinking she emphatically appears to resist her epistemological habit of erasing these differences. Thereby, seeing them, "She sees the world anew, and then she requires herself to drop her enchantment with 'woman', the universal, and begins to learn about other resisters at the colonial difference" (Lugones 2010: 753). This fictional response to the pitfalls of the dominant "white Turk", colonizing, orientalizing, homogenizing Turkish feminist paradigm appears to manifest a reading that "moves against the social-scientific objectifying reading, attempting rather to understand subjects, the active subjectivity emphasized as the reading looks for the fractures locus in resistance to the coloniality of gender at a coalitional starting point" (Ibid.).

Furthermore, as Shafak very often states, polarization, which primarily affects women, runs very deep in Turkey and pushes them into ready-made identities. Therefore, I believe Shafak's novel in a way serves as a mediator, the "singular connector of a diversity of decolonials" (Mignolo 2009: 161). I link this with the other decolonial

concepts of "the geo- and body-politics of knowledge" which ask for a "shift from the enunciated to the enunciation" (Ibid.). That is, the decolonization of privileged de facto knowledges, spaces, and subjectivities. Decolonialist thinker Walter Mignolo portrays these notions as follows:

> My humble claim is that geo- and body-politics of knowledge has been hidden from the self-serving interests of Western epistemology and that a task of decolonial thinking is the unveiling of epistemic silences of Western epistemology and affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued, and decolonial options to allow the silences to build arguments to confront those who take 'originality' as the ultimate criterion for the final judgment. (Ibid.)

Within this context, the Turkish social imaginary, which was once implemented by the Republican elite and prevails in its hegemonic status still today, employs a mimicking of Eurocentric rhetoric which can be termed self-colonialism or self-orientalism. Thus, I argue, it is necessary to draw on the decolonial option which will lead us to the coloniality of being, that is, the geo- and body-politics of knowledge, and particularly the coloniality of gender.

According to Mignolo, these decolonial paths have one thing in common, "the colonial wound" which is connected with "the fact that regions and people around the world have been classified as underdeveloped economically and mentally. Racism not only affects people but also regions or, better yet, the conjunction of natural resources needed by *humanitas* in places inhabited by anthropos" (2009: 161). Shafak is definitely aware of the "colonial wound" which is framed by dominating narratives that do not just classify identities racially but silences the 'different' based on culture, religion, class, and other aspects that do not fit into the dominant picture. Therefore, I position her as a border drifter/dweller and border shifter who aims to heal the wounds of invisible, silenced, and marginalized identities – particularly those of women – through literature. Shafak elaborates on this point in an interview:

> Art and football, strangely, are the only areas left in Turkey where people across the board can still meet and communicate. Otherwise, Turkey is a society of glass ghettoes and walls of prejudices. We are deeply polarized and divided into islands that are incapable of talking to each other. I have a diverse readership. Among my readers there are conservatives, liberals, Kemalists, leftists, feminists, Sufis… amazing diversity, which I treasure. People who don't break bread together can still read the same book. I want to go beyond identity politics and its narrow-mindedness. I want to transcend these artificial boundaries that day-to-day politics keeps drawing in front of us. (*Al-monitor* January 14, 2014)

Therefore, I argue that with *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) Shafak, contrary to the hegemonic social imaginary, attempts to present us with a decolonial imaginary enriched by a highly decolonial feminist perspective.

In conclusion, in the following part by employing decolonial feminism I will trace the invisible and silenced identities whose spiritualism, marginality, and difference in terms of class and race are all undervalued within the grand narrative based on Eurocentric modernity and secularism. Border crossings, diaspora, and diasporic subjectivities are other perceptions that I will deal with while specifically portraying the female characters. Lastly, the spatio-temporal dimension of knowledge built on global modernity/coloniality, is implicitly highlighted in order to deconstruct Eurocentric linear time, or rather secular time and the hierarchical construction of space, especially on the basis of decolonial perceptions of "imperial difference" and "the geo-politics of knowledge".

4.3. *The Bastard of Istanbul*: Decolonial (Feminist) Imaginary and Diasporic Subjectivities

> Once there was, once there was not. A long, long time ago, in a land not so far away, when the sieve was inside the straw, the donkey was the town crier, and the camel was the barber… When the world was upside down and time was a cycle that turned around and around so that the future was older than the past and the past was a pristine as newly sowed fields. Once there was, once there was not. God's creatures were as plentiful as grains and talking too much was a sin, for you could tell what you should not remember and you could remember what you should not tell.
>
> *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2007) 354

"Once there was, once there was not" is the preamble to all Turkish folk tales of the sort with which Elif Shafak starts *The Bastard of Istanbul* by informing the reader that it is also a preamble to an Armenian foke tale. As Virginia A. Tashjian states, such a beginning announces that, "Now we are leaving the present to enter another realm of time and space" (2007: xi). With regard to the preamble to the Turkish folk tale and the Armenian one, time loses its linear nature, breaks into a different spatio-temporal terrain, and shifts towards a decolonial imaginary which brings to the fore images of diasporic, subjugated, marginalized, and mystic women. These women became invisible and voiceless within the Turkish social imaginary, characterized as it is by the Western-based modernization and secularization package of the Republican era. A top-down nation-building program

implemented by the Republican elite turned into self-colonialism, especially on the basis of the image of women within the social imaginary. Therefore, I argue that such a continuum has significantly shaped the Turkish feminist framework in general, resulting in a feminist perception with serious pitfalls.

With the promulgation of the Eurocentric secular-national-modern formation of time/space, the rhetoric of progress, newness, and development emerged as perceptions which would create the *imagined community*. Simultaneously, Turkish feminism was compromised by the "white Turk" conception as a result of this modernization and secularization process. Thereupon, self-colonization and internal orientalism have become inevitable by causing the marginalization of certain images of women (i.e. mystic, religious, minority, diasporic) and "other" knowledges (i.e. folk tales, oral tradition, religious tales) which still today remain the most evident problem with Turkish feminism. Colonizing and subjugating identities, memories, and spritual/folk knowledges which fail to conform to the modern and secular order, the logic of coloniality demands that we reject a pre-modern past/time. As Artura Escobar suggests, "Modernity's anthropocentrism is related to logocentrism and phallogocentrism... [It is a] cultural project of ordering the world according to rational principles from the perspective of a male eurocentric consciousness in other words, building an allegedly ordered, rational, and predictable world" (2009: 37). Nevertheless, the preamble of the Turkish/Armenian folk tale in *BI* continues to undermine the spatio-temporal dimension of knowledge built on global modernity/coloniality, "When the world was upside down and time was a cycle that turned around and around so that the future was older than the past and the past was a pristine as newly sowed fields" (*BI* 2006: 354). This preamble of a folk tale signals the shift towards the decolonial imaginary and Shafak thus informs us of a fictional journey that will take us beyond the limits of the national/modern/secular spatio-temporal dimension. Paradoxically, the past will precede the present and future while linear time will be deconstructed.

In this sense, the significance of oral tradition (i.e. folk tale) in Shafak's fictional work is to uncover memories of exodus, diaspora, subjugation, and the tragedies of women along with spiritual, religious, and folkloric knowledges that have all been buried and forgotten as a result of dominating and colonizing national macro-narratives. "Once there was, once there was not. God's creatures were as plentiful as grains and talking too

much was a sin, for you could tell what you should not remember and you could remember what you should not tell" (*BI* 2006: 354). This complete quote of the preamble Shafak cites from a Turkish folk tale in *The Bastard of Istanbul* suggests that the officially "unwritten" counter-memories come alive through storytelling which emerges as a catalyst engaged in decolonial feminism in order to find alternative ways of knowing and knowledge production. In reality, as I mentinoed at the beginning of this chapter, Shafak was accused of insulting Turkishness based on a fictional character's statements about the Armenian diaspora in the novel. Her questioning of the Armenian deportations and, according to some sources, genocide within the Ottoman era in 1915 is still a sensitive issue to deal with in Turkey. To accept the deportations would have evoked the recognition of the traditional Ottoman umma (religious community) identity. As Ayla Göl writes, "The Turkish nation was imagined as a modern nation with territorial sovereignty after the erosion of traditional Ottoman umma (religious community) identity. During the process of this imagination, the Armenians became the first 'others', whose claims over eastern Anatolia were perceived as a real threat to Turkish territoriality and identity" (2005: 122). It was only after the 1980s that a number of scholars (Berktay 1983; Ortaylı 1983; Heper 2001; Kasaba 2002) "started a new debate to challenge official nationalism and its engagement with 'politically correct history', which implies the rejection of the Ottoman past and its selective explanation of Turkish nation-building" (Ibid.).

In this context, Shafak is one of the rare authors who contests macro-narratives. For her, with the advent of the Turkish Republic, Turkish society has been dealing with a "collective amnesia", which is what she condemns and writes about in novels like *Pinhan* (2001) and *The Flea Palace* (2005) (*Al-monitor* January 14, 2014). In these novels she unfold identities (e.g. Sufis, gypsies, minorities) that are marginalized by official Turkish histiography. As she puts it in an interview, she always goes out of her way to find different ways to write her novels, but particularly in the case of *BI* Shafak employed a distinctive narrative form which she describes as follows:

> I am a writer who is fascinated with details. In all my novels, I do extensive research for every single detail that comes my way. But particularly for this book, in addition to reading books and doing research, I also closely observed the lives of Armenian-American women in America and Muslim-Turkish women in Turkey. The more I observed, the more I was intrigued by the vastness of the common ground they share, often without knowing. Instead of macro questions of politics, it was the small things of daily life that inspired and guided me while writing this novel. Folk tales, lullabies, songs, recipes—especially Armenian and

> Turkish cuisine. Interestingly, cuisine is a boundary breaker. It recognizes no national or religious boundaries. So this is a novel in which women play the central role, both Armenian and Turkish women. (Ibid.)

Clearly, Shafak makes use of stereotypical features of the female image within the patriarchal discourse. However, her deliberately use of the kitchen image is mainly a way of presenting the common experiences which women share. It also reveals the fact that, although the Turkish and Armenian communities are estranged from each other, the kitchen can still be an image of their shared values. As Shafak states in *Women Writers, Islam, and the Ghost of Zulaikha* (2005), her fiction is "a manifesto of remembrance against the collective amnesia in Turkey".

4.4. Storytelling in Shafak's *BI*: A Feminist Strategy of Unfolding Buried Memories and Disrupting Power Structures

Within the Turkish context, storytelling comes to the fore as a significant and strategic decolonial feminist way of interrupting narratives that make up the dominant "white Turk" feminist (hi)stories. While storytelling can unconsciously or consciously contribute to a positioning and reinventing of power structures, Shafak's objective in re-telling and re-connecting the stories of Armenian and Turkish families, particularly women, in her novel is to provide an alternative history/story by deconstructing patriarchal and nationalist official accounts. As I discussed in Chapter One with reference to Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, storytelling is about taking possession of power. That is, "Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (Adichie 2009). Therefore, Shafak evidently puts special emphasis on oral tradition, namely storytelling or telling tales, which is a postcolonial feminist literary method of subverting dominant and official narratives.

Pramod K. Nayar in one of his studies asserts that postcolonial writers adapt oral traditions to their writings to move away from Eurocentric styles and influences:

> What must be kept in mind is that 'orality' is not a universal, general situation: it is linked to physical, cultural, and material contexts that are different for different cultures. Orality must be treated as a component of a specific social space with its own particularities of gender, class, sexuality, and politics. Meaning in oral traditions is based on the specific context of enunciation, and a word/sound has no permanent meaning beyond that immediate 'expression' (which marks the the point of departure from writing that seeks to 'freeze' the moment of enunciation). (2008: 223)

On the basis of this perspective, Shafak's narrative, making use of oral traditions like telling religious tales and/or traditionally transferred oral stories through her novel, closely coincides with the similar narrative method emplyoed by Algerian female writer Assia Djebar. In *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* (1989), Djebar makes use of the matriarchal oral tradition as a counter-narrative to write women back into Algerian history (de Medeiros 2007: 163). Djebar combines her personal story with the history of the French conquest of Algeria in 1830 and also with the Algerian War of the mid twentieth century with the individual chapters constructed in dialogue with the French archives, national history, and the personal stories of women. In this way she re-writes and re-positions the archival sources and confronts the hegemonic discourse of the colonialist and nationalist archives. As official historical accounts are written from patriarchal and/or colonial perspectives, Djebar proposes "a feminocentric account of the ways in which personal histories may be imbricated in history as such" (Ibid.). Much like Djebar, Shafak writes the women of the Armenian diaspora into national history. Shafak does not merely focus on the Armenian experience, since Turkish women (e.g. mystic, religious, traditional) alienated from the Kemalist discourse also possess primary significance in her fiction. In this context, she puts forward another alternative terrain, namely the decolonial imaginary, to reclaim time, space, and knowledge with her fiction. Both authors thus seem to manifest a feminist strategy of making use of storytelling, and so of literature, to challenge and transform power.

A highly provocative example of this crucial interplay between literature and the feminist framework is Chicana literature and Chicana feminism. To elaborate on this very briefly it is necessary to refer to Gloria Anzaldua's *mestiza consciousness* as depicted in *La Frontera/Borderlands: The New Mestiza* (1987) which works to reclaim a space, the borderlands. Anzaldua in her semi-autobiographical work employs literary techniques which reflect her identity politics – mestiza consciousness.

Very much like Shafak, by traveling through "non-Western folk/myth tropes and practices" she crosses through cultural boundaries and breaks into other spaces by dismantling the conception of cultural/national belonging (Alarcon 2002: 123):

> As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every women's sister or potential lover […] I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-

> Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the work and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. (1987: 103)

In a similar way, decolonial feminist Maria Lugones portrays such a positioning very beautifuly in her work "Playfulness, "World"-Travelling, and Loving Perception" (1987: 18):

> Through traveling to other people's 'worlds,' we discover that there are 'worlds' in which those who are the victims of arrogant perception are really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of cisions even though in the mainstream construction they are animated only by the arrogant perceiver and are pliable, foldable, file-awayable, classifiable.

The process of story telling enables both the writer and the reader to travel to other people's, particularly other women's, worlds in order to understand plurality and multiplicity of selves and knowledges. As Lugones concludes, "Only when we have traveled to each other's 'worlds' are we fully subjects to each other" (Ibid.).

Furthermore, the repossession of time through storytelling can be perceived through filmmaker and writer Trinh T. Minh-ha's essay entitled "Grandma's Story" in *Woman, Native, Other* (1989) where she points out that "the world's earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women" (1989: 121). According to Trinh, time needs to be reclaimed and revalued, particularly by women, to fathom the cyclical time needed to re-write/re-tell subjects as heterogeneous, multiple, and permeable.

Accordingly, Shafak likens stories to "whirling dervishes", sufis, who are "drawing circles beyond circles" (*Ted* 2010). The Sufi, representing the mystical dimension of Islam and the exaltation of love which is so important to Shafak in her novels (and especially in *The Bastard of Istanbul*) is once again thoroughly connected with Maria Lugones' "loving perception". Lugones' "loving perception" calls for us to love all women by traveling to "other" women's worlds. She starts her journey initially by connecting with her own mother:

> To love my mother was not possible for me while I retained a sense that it was fine for me and other to see her arrogantly. Loving my mother also required that I see with her eyes, that I got into my mother's world, that I see both of us as we are constructed in her world, that I witness her own sense of herself from within her world. Only through this traveling to her "world" could I identify with her world because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. Only then could I see her as a subject even if one subjected and only then could I see at all how meaning could arise fully between us… So

> traveling to each other's "worlds" would enable us to be through loving each other. (1987: 8)

4.5. Entering the Decolonial Feminist Terrain with *The Bastard of Istanbul*

The Bastard of Istanbul is Shafak's second novel written in English through which the reader is forced to confront Turkey's buried past which is full of the tragedies and pain which women have had to endure. The novel deals with the deportation of the Armenians in in 1915 and its ramifications. This historical event interweaves the story of two families, one American-Armenian – the Tchakmakchian family with roots in Istanbul – and the other one Turkish – the Kazancı family. Initially, Shafak portrays four generations of women in the Kazancı family living in "the slightly decrepit, high-ceilinged Ottoman *konak* that looked out of place amid five times as tall modern apartment buildings on both sides" in Istanbul (*BI* 2006: 22). There is the great-grandmother, Petite-Ma, who has "always been capable of loving without suffocating" and suffered from Alzheimer's disease (127). Then there is Grandma Gülsüm, an angry woman that has "never been reciprocally loved" (217). Furthermore, Grandma Gülsüm has four daughters: Banu, Cevriye, Feride and Zeliha. And there is Asya, the rebellious grand-daughter who constantly complains of being the member of the Kazancı family who "among other things, profess[ed] the alchemy of absurdity, continually converting nonsense into some sort of logic with which you could convince everyone, and with a little push even yourself" (65). Here Asya's depiction of the Kazancı women already signals our shift towards a multi-dimensional terrain where the zero point epistemology is likely to be challenged with "other" principles of knowledge. Furthermore, the family also includes an estranged brother, Mustafa, living in Arizona with his wife Rose and her Armenian daughter, Armanoush. Armanoush's grandmother Shushan is the main character who has witnessed the tragedy of the Armenian deportations.

The novel slowly reaches its climax point when Armanoush Tchakhmakhchian decides to trace her Armenian past by visiting her step-father Mustafa's family in Istanbul. She secretly flies to Istanbul, meets the Kazancı sisters, and becomes fast friends with Asya. There is then a plot twist when we find out that the Kazancıs have family ties. At this point, secrets linking the two families are uncovered. It takes the eldest Kazancı daughter, the Muslim mystic, to uncover the truth with the help of an evil djinni, Mr Bitter. Thus, we learn that Asya is in fact Zeliha's daughter, who was raped by her brother

Mustafa and kept the incest story to herself. Another essential truth Banu, the mystic Kazancı sister, discovers is that Armanoush's grandma Shushan is an Armenian woman who once left her son in Istanbul for the sake of her national story. In the end we realize that the son later became Grandma Gülsüm's husband, the oppressive patriarch of the Kazancı women.

4.5.1. Auntie Banu: The Sufi Mystic (hi)Story-Teller and Time/Space Traveler

Banu, the mystic auntie of Asya, is one of the most significant female characters in the novel and emerges as the nexus of the Kazancı and the Tchakhmakhchian women's shared stories. Her role as a mediator permeates the novel through story-telling. Hidden histories of women are unearthed with the enactment of anachronistic elements such as Banu's role as a clairvoyant, a spiritual/time traveler, and also as a Sufi mystic. With this perspective she creates a decolonial space that allows the revelation of counter-memories buried beneath the dominant narratives. Thus, Auntie Banu is known for her practices as a soothsayer and has the ability to tell the future through coffee cup reading and tarot cards:

> It took a fortune-teller no longer than a flash to become legendary in Istanbul. If luck was on your side, it sufficed to succesfuly read someone's future, and the next thing you knew, that person would become your top costumer. And with the help of the wind and the seagulls, she would spread the word so quickly throughout the city that no more than a week there would be a line of costumers waiting at the door. So had Auntie Banu made her way up the ladder of the art of clairvoyance, becoming more famous with each rung. Her costumers came from all around the city, virgins and widows, lasses and toothless grannies, the poor and the affluent, each immersed in their own qualms and all dying to learn what Fortuna, that fickle feminine force, had in store for them. (65)

Auntie Banu achieves the role of a spiritual leader, thus dissociating Banu from a dichotomous hierarchy grounded on a Western cosmology which labels the spiritual and the folkloric as pre-modern. In her essay "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" (2010), Maria Lugones dismantles the notion "pre-modern" and proposes the term "non-modern" with reference to Juan Ricardo Aparicio and Mario Blaser (743). For Lugones, non-Western ways of cosmological, ecological, economic, and spiritual understandings and dynamics are reduced to pre-modern by modern apparatuses (Ibid.). Thus, "non-modern knowledges, relations, and values, and ecological, economic, and spiritual practices are logically constituted to be at odds with a dichotomous, hierarchical, 'categorical' logic" (Ibid.). Therefore, Auntie Banu's non-modern ways of knowing can be interpreted as

resisting the geo- and body-politics of knowledge from a "fractured locus" as Lugones and Walter Mignolo (753).

It appears, then, that throughout the novel Banu is portrayed as an epistemic subject who provides an alternative history to dominant official narratives and thus to zero point epistemology. For decolonial thinkers like Ramon Grosfoguel, the zero point epistemology can be described as "the ego-politics of knowledge" in which "the subject of the enunciation is erased, hidden, camouflaged" (2012: 89). The "zero-point philosophy" or "zero-point epistemology" universalizes "the linear trajetory of Western history and Western thoughts (once again, from Greek and Latin categories of thought to German's, English's and French's) and is implicitly represented by a European, masculine, heterosexual, white, Judeo-Christian subject (Mignolo 2009: 310). The zero-point epistemology demands the delocalization of knowledge in which modernity, as Mignolo puts it, is its imagined house (quoted in Martin Alcoff 2007: 83). To situate Auntie Banu as the epistemic subject here is to reverse the modern way of knowing, and thus to attempt a decolonial break.

Though Auntie Banu, as the epistemic subject and enunciator, emerges as the representative of godlike features such as omnipotence and omnicience with regard to her mediating role between the female visitors and the goddess Fortuna, her knowledge and subjectivity cannot be "shaped by the colonial and imperial differences that structured the modern/colonial world" (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012: 207). All the customers of Banu who are hungry for knowledge are all women, as she herself "had taken an oath never to receive male customers" (*BI* 2006: 66). Banu creates a completely female-only sphere in a different terrain from the modern/colonial world order, the decolonial imaginary. Nevertheless, Banu's portrayel as a clairvoyant and mystic woman demands an in-depth analysis in terms of her ambiguous characterization, since Banu's femininity conflicts with the modern and secular gender-role stereotype and evolves into a decolonial standpoint in which the heterosexualism of the colonial/modern gender system is undermined.

By the "modern and secular gender-role stereotype" I refer to Joan W. Scott's recent discussion of the shift from secularism to sexularism (sexism). In the *Ursula Hirschmann Annual Lecture on Europe and Gender* held in 2009, Scott gave a lecture

entitled “Sexularim” in which she closely examined the genealogy of secularism to expose the underlying myth of idealizing its improving aspect with regard to the female sex. According to Scott, sexual difference is ignored when we argue about the secular subject, and she also argues that “the gender equality secularism promises is always troubled by sexual difference” (Ibid.).

Historically, the emancipatory effects of secularism need to be scrutinized, for instance, “the French revolutionaries who attempted to domesticate the Catholic church banished women from political meetings and active citizenship” (5). Such historical incidents occured on the grounds of biology. The originary moments of secularism need to be uncovered, as they portray the sexist perception that associates women with religion – “the feminization of religion” (Ibid.). On this Scott quotes Charles Taylor, the author of *A Secular Age* (2007): “It is really only in our time that the older image of hierarchical complementary between men and women are being comprehensively challenged. But this is a late in a ‘long march’ process” (167). Nevertheless, the characterization of the “long march” story is a myth of liberalism. She is thus in complete agreement with Talal Asad when he writes: “What has often been described as the political eclusion of women, the proportyless, colonial subjects in liberalism’s history can be re-described as the gradual extension of liberalism’s incomplete project of universal emancipation” (Asad 2003: 59). One vital question Scott raises is thus that, “Although women are now voters, there are only small proportions of them in legislative bodies-today women account for some 18% of deputies in the French National Assembly, about 16% in the US House of Representatives and 9% in Turkey’s parliament” (Scott 2009: 5). She notes that the secularization process connected with women’s equality is in real complex in itself and links this to the obscurity of secularim(s). That is, “In the process of Western secularization, the status of women became a concern of modernity in association of imperialist adventures. Colonial powers often justified their conquests in terms that made the treatment of women an index of ‘civilization’” (7).

In this context, Scott takes her argument further and observes a recurring theme with regard to the practice of secularism(s), both within and outsidde muslim nation-states, which implicitly underscore “sexularism” (i.e. sexual difference). Her observation is mainly in relation to women, religion, and the veil or rather the ban on the Islamic veil

in countries like France and Turkey. The controversies between religion, particularly Islam, and secularim(s) (e.g. Turkish laicité) have reproduced the language of dualism:

> Sexual difference conceived as a natural distinction rooted in physical bodies is the basis for representing the alternative between past and future, religion and rationality, private and public. The irreconcilability of these options is underscored by linking them to women and men—a fundamental division that seems to admit of no ambiguity, even if the roles the sexes actually play do not fall so neatly into one category or another. To the extent that these representations assuage deeply rooted, even unconscious anxieties they secure the plausibility of the secular. To the extent that they structure the meanings of secularism, they feed into its normative expectations, indeed they contribute to the production of gendered secular subjects. (2009: 8)

Scott does not claim that there is no difference between religious and secular societies' treatment of women. However, she criticizes the insistence on religious practices only being allowed to have one meaning from a secular perspective, as is the case with veiling. As a result, we see how the idea of equality linked with the autonomous agency of individuals in secularism has succumbed to paternalistic perceptions and policies. The "gendered secular subject" Scott elaborates on is also very much related to Maria Lugones' focus on heterosexualism within the colonial/modern gender system.

Lugones criticizes some white feminist theorists for simplifying gender in terms of patriarchy (2007: 188). She concedes that the "white" might seem redundant, however, "It is white because it seems unavoidably enmeshed in a sense of gender and of gendered sexuality that issues from what I call the light side of the modem/colonial gender system" (187). According to Lugones, for women to build any solidarity amongst themselves, they must reject the colonial/modem gender system and the coloniality of power (188). She argues that heterosexualism and patriarchy are, indeed, all characteristic of what she calls "the light side of the colonial/modern organization of gender. Hegemonically, these are written large over the meaning of gender" (190).

The "coloniality of power" Lugones employs is a notion coined taken from the decolonial thinker Anibal Quijano who in his study "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America" (2000) argues that with the emergence of colonial domination on the part of the same dominant race (i.e. Europeans) new social identities were produced (2000: 537). The colonization of America and "the expansion of European colonialism to the rest of the world, the subsequent constitution of Europe as a *newid*-entity needed the elaboration of a Eurocentric perspective of knowledge, a theoretical perspective on the

idea of race as a naturalization of colonial relations between Europeans and non-Europeans" (2000: 535). Historically, this led to the legitimization of a specific binary system, that is, the superiority/inferiority between the dominant and the dominated (Ibid.). Eurocentricism as the hegemonic perspective of knowledge yields to the coloniality of power that goes in parallel with the concept of modernity, including rational science and the secularitization of thought.

At this juncture, Quijano hints at the intertwining of race and gender by initially referring to Descartes' dualist approach to the body and non-body which implies "a radical separation between reason/subject and body" (2000: 555). The secularization of the soul through reason brought about the mutation of "reason" into a new entity, that is, the reason/subject which represents "the only entity capable of rational knowledge" (Ibid.). To have a closer look at Quijano's "reason/subject and body" dualism:

> The body was and could be nothing but an object of knowledge. From this point of view the human being is, par excellence, a being gifted with reason, and this gift was conceived as localized exclusively in the soul. Thus the body, by definition incapable of reason, does not have anything that meets reason/subject. The radical separation produced between reason/subject and body and their relations should be seen only as relations between the human subject/reason and the human body/nature, or between spirit and nature. In this way, in Eurocentric rationality the body was fixed as object of knowledge, outside of the environment of subject/reason. (Ibid.)

Thus, much like many third world feminism(s), women of color feminisms, and post-colonial theorists, Lugones and Quijano confirm the intersection between gender, class, race, and sexuality. In particular, the intersection of race, class, and gender is "a colonial introduction, a violent introduction consistently and contemporarily used to destroy peoples, cosmologies, and communities as the building ground of the "civilized" West " (Lugones 2007: 186).

Though Lugones' colonial/modern gender system is inspired by Quijano's "coloniality of power", she indicates that his analysis is inadequate in adressing the intertwining of race and gender. Therefore, she offers a framework (i.e. the colonial/modern gender system) to start thinking about the heterosexism that plays a key part in the above mentioned intersection. Thus, the "gender system is heterosexualist, as heterosexuality permeates racialized patriarchal control over production, including knowledge production, and over collective authority" (Lugones 2007: 206). One must bear in mind that Lugones' emphasis on heterosexualism does not really imply a politics

of homonormativity, since her focus is rather on encouraging love, recognition, coalition-building, and so solidarity between women which she depicts through "world-traveling". As I observed earlier in this Chapter, in "Playfulness, "World"-Travelling, and Loving Perception" (1987: 18) Lugones clarifies that the loving perception she proposes intersects with traveling to other women's worlds and discovering them as "really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of cisions".

As a matter of ideology and the cognitive production of modernity, gender is reduced to the private in order to exert control over sex and its resources and products which evoke the perception of "race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/whites and colonized/nonwhite peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender-both are powerful fictions" (Lugones 2007: 202). As a result, both Scott's and Lugones' observations prove that today in many social, cultural, and political contexts secularism and modernism cooperate with each other to foster a new binarism (e.g. heterosexualism/sexualism, racism, classism, coloniality).

Within this context, Shafak's Auntie Banu to a great extent can be defined as a counter image of Scott's gendered secular subject and Lugones' mythical fictional female image of the colonial/modern gender system. Banu is an in-between character – she is other-worldly, a non-body with reference to her role as the enunciator of knowledge. As the delocalized mediator between the Goddess Fortuna and the female anticipators, her customers, Banu represents the "border woman" of Gloria Anzaldua in the *Borderlands* (1987). She embodies an alternative gender, the "third gender" which Lugones employs as a decolonial option with reference to Michael Horswell (2007: 201). Accordingly, the notion does not literally imply a third gender, rather it is "a way of breaking with sex and gender bipolarities. The 'third' is emblematic of other possible combinations than the dimorphic" (Ibid.).

Banu is married to a good man who has "never treated her badly or said a mean word, but after losing her two sons, Auntie Banu could not stand living with him anymore. Every now and then, she goes to her old house, like a stranger who knows every detail of a place from deja vu" (*BI* 2006: 222). However, Banu has yearned for knowledge more than anything. For the sake of knowledge, Banu has given up on her husband, her role as

a wife, her family life, and even her age. Half-way through the novel, one night Banu sees herself in the mirror:

> The woman in the mirror looks old tonight. Auntie Banu always thought aging swiftly was the price she had to pay for her profession. The overwhelmingly majority of human beings age year by year, but not the clairvoyants: They age story by story. If only she had wanted to, Auntie Banu could have asked for compensation. Just as she has not asked her djinn for any material gains, she has not asked for physical beauty either. (223)

Here the djinn whom the narrator hints at is Mr Bitter, a *gulyabani,* whom Banu had bound years ago after being in seclusion for forty days.

One has to bear in mind that spiritual phenomena in Islam exist outside the paradigm of dualism. For example, Amira el Zein, the author of *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (2009), compares Western-based modern philosophy initiated with Descartes to Islam. She argues that modern philosophy embodies a dual nature which views things in terms of opposite pairs – "logos versus mythos, sensation versus intellect, metaphorical versus literal, inner versus outer, object versus subject, spiritual versus supernatural, nature versus culture, and humans versus the Divine. Nothing seems to mediate between these pairs" (2009: xvii). Accordingly, auntie Banu's Mr Bitter also represents Banu herself, their role is not really that of a master Banu and slave Mr Bitter. Rather, it is intermingled because, according to the Quran, djinns and humans are both defined as intellectual species, they both "have mental faculties that allow them to access knowledge, perceive the truth, and distinguish them from all other living beings in the universe" (2009: 13). However, a djinn is made from different elements, and it is a spiritual power that dwells both in the human and out of him/her as well (2009: 33). Mr Bitter, as portrayed by the narrator, "was created from an entirely different mold and had come from places where the wind never stopped howling. Mr Bitter was very old, even in terms of djinn years. Consequently, he was far more powerful than he often made it sound, for as everybody knows too well, the older they are the more potent the djinn become" (*BI* 200: 188). Mr Bitter as a gulyabani is "the most treacherous among all the djinn, yet also the most knowledgeable when it came to traumatic ends" (*BI* 2006: 191). These gulyabanis like Mr Bitter "were the ugly witnesses of the ugliness human beings were capable of inflicting on one another" (*BI* 2006: 192). At this point it is essential to emphasize that Mr Bitter, who supplies knowledge to Banu, is apparently a male djinn. Banu's relationship with Mr Bitter, whom I also identify as a part of her

identity, seems very complex as there is this constant tension over the question of authority, “Though Mr. Bitter had been serving her for more than six years now, she regarded their rapport as a temporary contract that had to be renewed every so often. Never had she treated him callously or condescendingly, for she knew that djinn, unlike human beings, had ever lasting memories of wrong done to them” (*BI* 2006: 188). Now that Mr Bitter is male and, as I claim, a part of Banu’s identity, he can be taken as her blurring of the gender bipolarities.

On the other hand, Mr Bitter capacity to also represent a darker side of her personality can be seen in Banu’s murdering her own brother Mustafa with a bowl of *ashure,* a holy dessert in Islam representing stability and continuity, in order to punish him for the rape of their sister Zeliha. A dialogue after the murder is as follows, “What have you done, master?” Mr Bitter croaked as he broke into a sulky grin, as was expected of him. ‘You intervened in the way of the world!’” (*BI* 2006: 354). Interestingly, the religious Banu’s response reveals no regret, “I am ostracized forever from the world of the virtuous. I will never go to heaven. I will be thrown directly into the flames of hell. But Allah knows there is little regret in my heart” (*BI* 2006: 355). Banu believes in the necessity of evil, as one day she would tell Asya, her niece, that if one ever steps “into a mine of malice, it won’t be one of these people you will ask help from” (*BI* 2006: 69). And as Amira el Zein would depict the Islamic perception about good and evil, “Know that the soul, the devil, the angel are not realities outside of you, you are they” (*BI* 2006: 11).

Besides Mr Bitter, Banu also owns another djinn whom she calls Mrs Sweet and from whom she receives knowledge. Banu feels very close to Mrs Sweet and trusts her a lot as “she was not one of those renegades but a kind-hearted, devout djinni who had converted to Islam from atheism—a malady which ran rampant among many a djinni. Mrs Sweet visited mosques and shrines frequently, and was highly knowledgeable in the Holy Qur’an” (*BI* 2006: 187). Auntie Banu and Mrs Sweet’s relationship can be interpreted as solidarity and coalition between women. Both female figures play the role of resisting leaders against the male dominant Islamic milieu in the spiritual sense and as mystics transmitting knowledge to female anticipators. Furthermore, Banu herself distracts us from the secular-liberal social imaginary within the Turkish context by being the representative of knowledge as a sufi woman. Thus, Banu’s religious and spiritual

agency is not just limited to private worship. Rather, it turns out to be a form of non-secular sociality that implicitly deconstructs oppressive, Western-based, and patriarchal socio-political power structures by uncovering the hidden and essentialized voices and stories of women with a myriad of differences. Obviously, Banu's positioning very much corresponds with a decolonial feminist standpoint which re-establishes an alternative narrative challenging the colonial/modern gender system which, I would argue, has compromised the dominant feminist framework in Turkey.

Auntie Banu strives to reach the *Al-Insān al-Kāmil,* which is the state of spiritual perfection in Sufism described by Ibn Arabi. The most fundamental characteristic of the *Al-Insān al-Kāmil* is possessing a status that is genderless. That Shafak burdens Banu with roles such as the enunicator, story-teller, the one exposing counter-memories, the Sufi, and also as the one who uncovers the pains of diasporic women such as Grandma Shushan is not coincidental. Shafak is one of the prominent feminist authors who openly problematizes the hastened top-down Westernization in Turkey. In an article on women writers and the rhetoric of modernization, Shafak states that "in the name of hastened Westernization and modernization-from-above, countless cultural edifices have been razed to the ground throughout Turkey's political history" (*Words without Borders* 2005). On this Cemal Kafadar writes as follows:

> We cannot understand the contemporary attitudes toward Sufism among Turkish intellectuals without grasping the schizophrenic quality of the modern Turkish cultural life in general. the distinctly undemocratic character of the Turkish reform and modernization process, from the pre-Tanzimat period on, led to a sharp cleavage between an "enlightened" elite of reformers and an "ignorant" mass of traditionalists or reactionaries. Despite its populist leanings, the republican regime inherited and willfully nurtured this disparity. (1992: 315)

Likewise, Shafak criticizes this schizophrenic attitude and additionaly argues that the cultural-elite, specifically the Kemalists and the leftists, persistently interpret "secularism as a complete disenchantment with cultural and political life", and they mistrust "anything, everything, associated with Islam, the Turkish cultural elite was also cut off from this tradition of folk Islam" (*Words without Borders* 2005). Rejecting folk Islam, Sufism, and other traditional aspects of Turkish culture have prevented the emergence of alternative feminist narratives posing a challenge to the hegemonic norms of the secular-modern social imaginary imposed on women of different races, cultures, beliefs, and communities in Turkey.

Sa'diyya Shaikh in *In Search of al-Insān: Sufism, Islamic Law, and Gender* (2009) writes, "While negative understandings of women have been evident in some strands of Sufi thought and practices from its inception, particularly its earlier ascetic variety, Sufism in other instances has provided gender-egalitarian spaces" (782). As the individual's inner state is a priority in Sufi teachings one can possibly find cases of female mystics who, "[like their] male contemporaries lived independently, traveled on their own in search of knowledge, and had teachers and disciples of both sexes" (783). Surely, Shafak and Shaikh are sharing similar perspectives in emphasizing the need for "uncovering marginalized liberatory gender models that can empower contemporary struggles for justice" (785).

For instance, both in her Ted speech and in her article "Women Writers, Islam, and the Ghost of Zulaikha" Shafak tells her personal story about the (re)readings of Islam. As Shafak was the daughter of a single mother, she was looked after by two grandmothers for some time. Interestingly, the two grandmothers, who had similar class backgrounds and were both Muslims, had very different interpretations of religion. Her father's mother adhered to a religion of fear – "The Jalal side of Allah appealed to her more than anything else. She taught me about the patronizing, paternal, and celestial gaze always watching me from above to then make a note of all the sins I committed down here" (2005). She explains how she came home traumatized out of fear that Allah would punish her for the sins she had committed. But shortly after, she would move to the house of her other grandmother and would enter a different milieu replete with folk Islam and superstitions. This grandmother's understanding of religion and Allah was the complete opposite of her grandmother on her father's side. Like auntie Banu from the novel, this grandmother likewise poured molten lead to prevent the evil eye and read the coffee cups. Her most distinctive feature was that she was the follower of the religion of love and in this way highly influenced Shafak's fiction writing and even feminist positioning:

> For her Allah wasn't a God to be feared but a God to be loved. Indeed, the celestial gaze watched us constantly, she agreed, but it also blinked from time to time, just like any other eye would. Those times of blinking were the moments of freedom when we were invisible to God. "Sure, the religious authorities are rigid, and yes, some teachings are constraining, but do not worry," she would say, "for they are bricks, you are water. They will stay put, you will flow." She is the one who taught me all about water. Love and faith could be just like water, so fluidlike. I doubt if I have entirely managed to follow the path of the water in love and faith, but eventually, that was the model my fiction writing followed. (Ibid.)

Shafak distinguishes the notion of God associated with the patriarchal narrative from Allah who in Islam is depicted as genderless and has a fluid image. The male characters in the novel such as Levent Kazancı, the oppressive father of the Kazancı sisters, and Mustafa, the rapist brother, are in general portrayed as stereotypical patriarchs. All the male images are either dead or are almost given no voice through the text, except for a cat, "The only male in the house is "a silver tabby cat with an insatiable hunger, an unusual fondness for water, and plentiful social-stress symptoms, which could be best interpreted as independent, and at worst as neurotic. His name was Pasha the Third" (*BI* 2006: 32). However, Allah is taken out of this vicious circle in which men like Mustafa have raped women, deported them to far away geographies such as the Armenian grandma Shushan, or performed domestic violence like Levent Kazancı. On the other hand, God is described as an in-between creator in terms of gender and authority. I will illustrate this perception of God's ambigious status in terms of gender and authory in the next part in relation to another main female character, Zeliha, who is both the mother and sister of Asya Kazancı, the titular bastard of Istanbul.

4.5.2. Auntie Zeliha's Non-Believing, In-Between and Resisting Subjectivity

Zeliha, the mother and sister of Asya, is a female character in the novel who has a complex relationship with God: "Among all the Kazancı women she was the only one who was openly irreligious. As a child it used to please her to imagine Allah as her best friend, which was not a bad thing of course, except that her other best friend was a garrulous, freckled girl who had made smoking a habit at the age of eight" (*BI* 2006: 17). After becoming good friends, Zeliha and the girl decide to cut their index fingers and mix their blood to become blood-sisters, "For a week the two girls went around with bloody bandages wrapped around their fingers as a sign of their sisterhood. Back in those days, whenever Zeliha prayed it would be this bloody bandage she would be thinking about—if only Allah too could become a blood sister… her blood sister…" (Ibid.). Nevertheless, she felt uneasy with the idea that, "Allah could not and should not be personified. Allah did not have fingers, or blood for that matter.. His—ninety-nine names happened to be qualities also pertinent to human beings. He could see it all but had no eyes; He could hear it all but had no ears… Out of all this information an eight-year-old Zeliha had drawn the conclusion that Allah could resemble us, but we could not resemble Him. Or was it vice versa?" (*BI* 2006: 18). As a result, Zeliha starts avoiding the belief in God when one

day she realizes that her blood-sister has become blood-sister with her elder sister Feride, "Zeliha felt betrayed. Only then it dawned on her that her real objection to Allah was not his — that is to say, His— not having any blood but rather having too many blood-sisters, too many to care for so as to end up caring for anyone" (Ibid.).

Zeliha resides in the space of in-between, apparently revealing herself as never giving into religion: "She lived as an agnostic, and she will die as one. Sincere and pure in her blasphemy. If Allah really exists somewhere, He should appreciate this heartfelt denunciation of hers, germane to only a select few, rather than being sweet-talked by the self-absorbed pleas of the religious fanatics, who are everywhere" (*BI* 2006: 222). Among the Kazancı women, Zeliha comes out as an eccentric character who is not just rebellious but also a very strong woman. At a very young age she is raped by her own brother, and gets pregnant with Asya. Her resentment towards Allah stronger after this traumatic incident, "Provided that Allah exists and knows so much, why did He not do anything with that knowledge of His? Why does He let things happen the way they do?" (Ibid.). Zeliha's decision to give birth to her illegitimate baby is once again a sign of her strength, as she faces social oppression especially from her mother Gülsüm who is frustrated by Zeliha's rebelliousnous and obstinateness, "Shame on you! You have always brought disgrace on this family… Look at your nose piercing… All that makeup and the revoltingly shirt skirts, and oh, those high heels! This is what happens when you dress up… like a whore! You should thank Allah night and day; you should be grateful that there no men around in this family. They would have killed you" (*BI* 2006: 29).

Grandma Gülsüm appears to be the voice of patriachal authority and is one of the completely secular female images in the novel. She is the only Kazancı women to name the unborn baby a bastard, and it is from grandma Gülsüm that Asya gets to know about her bastard status at a young age:

> Then at age ten, she discovered that unlike all the other girls in her classroom, she had no male role model in her household. It would take her another three years to comprehend that this could have a lasting effect on her personality. On her fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth birthdays, she uncovered respectively three other truths about her life: that other families were not like hers and some families could be normal; that in her ancestry there were too many women and too many secrets about men who disappeared too early and too peculiarly; and that no matter how hard she strived, she was never going to be a beatiful woman. (*BI* 2006: 62)

Asya becomes a rebellious character like her mother, or auntie, which Zeliha prefers instead of being called "mother".

Besides her mother, Asya is the other prominent agnostic female figure in the novel: "Regrettably Asya was not blessed with even a wee bit of faith. She was too mordant to have confidence in the flow of time. She was burning fire inside without the slightest faith in the righteousness of the divine order" (*BI* 2006: 125). It is remarkable that both the resisting mother and her daughter share one outstanding physical characteristic, their "frizzy", "sable" and "wild" hair (*BI* 2006: 64). Their wild hair symbolizes a fundamental part of their identity puzzle that is sexual and so uncontrollable which I associate with a well-known mythological character, namely Medusa, and another literary female figure from Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with A Pearl Earring* (1999).

In *Off with Her Head!: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture* (1995), Molly Myerowitz Levine argues that rampant hair is considered a sign of "unfettered sexuality" in religious sources like the Talmud, and so is "a curse laid on womankind" (93). In a highly patriarchal society like that of Medusa's, she is accused of attracting and seducing the god Poseidon, which ends up with her rape in the goddess Athena's temple. Ultimately, she is punished by Athena and her hair is transformed into threatening snakes: "This aspect of the myth uses hair to encode both the lure and the threat of female sexuality to patriarchy" (94). Medusa's fate noticeably corresponds with Zeliha's rape incident. In the same way, just as Medusa does not stop being threatening to men with her gaze and snaky locks after her rape and transformation, so Zeliha does not stop wearing her flamboyant mini-skirts depicting "her own way of protesting the moral codes" (*BI* 2006: 221).

Another literary female figure who resembles Medusa and Zeliha is Griet from Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with A Pearl Earring* (1999). This is a novel based on Dutch painter Jan Vermeer's acclaimed painting of the same name. In brief, the novel is about a maid named Griet who is hired to clean Vermeer's studio meticulously. After some time Vermeer realizes that Griet possesses an aesthetic perception very similar to his own and so he makes her his assistant. At one point, he decides to paint Griet with his wife's pearl earring, an episode which can be viewed as his attempt to seduce her. Like Zeliha and Medusa, Griet has frizzy hair; however, she always keeps her hair hidden.

Except for the hair image, there is a more striking resemblance that links Zeliha and Griet which is the piercing of their own flesh. Griet pierces her own ear on the request of Vermeer for the sake of the painting, thus metaphorically symbolizing sexual intercourse and her submission to him. By contrast, Zeliha pierces her own nose of her own volition and despite the fact that society will react disapprovingly:

> She managed to ignore their gaze, just as she managed to ignore the gaze of all men who stared at her body with hunger. The vendors looked disapprovingly at her shiny nose ring too, as if therein lay a clue as to her deviance from modesty and thereby the sign of her lustfulness. She was especially proud of her piercing because she had done it herself. It had hurt but the piercing was here to stay and so was her style. Be it the harrasment of men or the reproach of other women, the impossibility of walking on cobblestones or hopping into the ferryboats, and even her mother's constant nagging… there was no power on earth that could prevent Zeliha, who was taller than most women in this city, from donning miniskirts of glaring colors, tight-fitting blouses that displayed her ample breasts, satiny nylon stockings, and yes those towering heels. (*BI* 2006: 3)

Both women have a sense of aesthetics of their own with respect to Griet's assisting position with a famous painter and Zeliha being a tattoo artist. Furthermore, both women prior to their sexual encounter with men symbolically penetrate themselves by piercing either their ear or their nose.

None of the women have therefore really given into patriarchal authority and narratives. This might lead us to Lugones' notion of "resistant subjectivity" which is denied "legitimacy, authority, voice, sense, and visibility" (2010: 746). The piercing of the body parts can be inferred as a deconstruction of the heterosexualist patriarchy that is "tied to a persistently violent domination that marks the flesh multiply by accessing the bodies of the unfree in differential patterns devised to constitute them as the tortured materiality of power" (2007: 188). Though Griet ends up marrying the butcher's boy, Zeliha is determined to fight against social pressure:

> To her way of thinking, anyone who cannot rise up and rebel, anyone devoid of the ability to dissent, cannot really be said to be alive. In resistance lies the key to life. The rest of the people fall into two camps: the vegetables, who are fine with everything, and the teaglasses, who, though not fine with numerous things, lack the strenght to confront. It is the latter that are the worst of the two. (221)

As John A. Rush illustrates in *Spiritual Tattoo: A Cultural History of Tattooing, Piercing, Scarification, Branding and Implants* (2005), the piercing of the flesh is enacted as a punishment ritual "to remove something from the system, an unacceptable behavior or perhaps the total person, in order to regain control or remove obstacles to the future" (19).

The suffering and pain while piercing or tattooing the body is endured in order to reach the path of spirituality, thus reflecting a religious rite of self-sacrifice and crucifixion. In this way, the body becomes a vehicle of purification and revelation which, in Zeliha's case, represents her rape incident as "the victim" of the darkest side of patriarchy among the Kazancı women.

The body-politics apparent throughout the narrative are essential for making us question why Zeliha's body and sexuality are specifically highlighted. While the title of the novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, appears to focus on Asya's bastardness, the novel itself starts and ends with Zeliha whom we see at first hand heading to her own abortion. She is portrayed as a tall woman who loves wearing "miniskirts of glaring colors, tight-fitting blouses that display her ample breasts, satiny nylon stockings", and does not care how the street vendors or other men gaze at her body with hunger on the streets of Istanbul (*BI* 2006: 3). Though her mother tells her that women should wax all their bodily hair and never shave, Zeliha prefers the latter. It is the self-declared "secularized" mother Gülsüm who always highlights the modesty and purity of women, and, ironically, insults Zeliha for her rape. Thus, she is regularly reminded about the unwritten and unbreakable rules of "Female Prudence" (*BI* 2006: 5).

Contrary to the mental and physical attempts to repress her sexuality and thus her identity within a highly patriarchal milieu, her decision to become a tattoo artist deserves special attention. Contrary to his previous argument, John A. Rush presents a paradoxical interpretation of piercing and tattooing. He argues that such body modifications can be related to "a glorification of the human body with enjoyment of fleshiness and sensuality, symbols to be seen and appreciated" (2005: 18). Using the body as a palette and performing your own art mirrors a divine act. Zeliha's profession as a tattoo artist upsets the power structures of the colonial/modern gender system and her whole practice adheres "to the ancient shamanistic practice of simultaneously internalizing and externalizing one's totems", thus taking us from linear secular time to a different and "non-modern" cyclical time (*BI* 2006: 72). This move from linear to cyclical time once again comes forward as a reaction to the hegemonic and patriarchal configuration rooted in the Turkish modernization process. Like Banu, Zeliha is marked with a subjectivity that is located on the margins of modernized Turkish society. On the one hand, she is the non-body like Banu, a category that stages the body as a symbolic reenactment of specific visions of

Turkish nationalism, secularism, and modernity, while on the other she is an example of how the female body is victimized under the paternal/patriarchal narrative of the public gaze.

The Bastard of Istanbul (2006) is mainly based on Zeliha's rape by her own brother, which she keeps as a secret for years. Here Shafak consciously writes through the female body and makes it a fundamental symbol with which we track the burdened stories of the Turkish Kazancı women and the Armenian Tchakhmakhchian women in diaspora. By being a fictional response to the vicious circle which the Turkish feminist paradigm is stuck in, Shafak's novel displays a decolonial portrayal of the female body and subjectivity. That is, specific female figures like Banu and Zeliha are putting forward a counter-memory and subjectivities of a decolonial imaginary. Banu does this with her standpoint as the enunciator from the fractured locus and Zeliha through her body passed onto other bodies through art, namely tattooing that comes from a pre-modern era.

Shafak, both as an ardent feminist and an author, is deeply bothered by the colonial/modern construct that implements false essentialisms which are primarily grounded on the gender binary. Since women are seen as the natural transmitters and guardians of national-social memory and being stripped of their sexuality, Shafak problematizes not only the secular-modern female image but also conservative Islamist interpretations. In many speeches and articles she especially expresses her distaste for the particular model of defeminized women systematically encouraged by the Kemalist reformists (*Words without Borders* 2005). Shafak sees herself as "a woman attached to Islamic, as well as Jewish and Christian heterodox mysticism", so she completely rejects the "rationalized, disenchanted, centralized" Turkish image (Ibid.).

It is for all these reasons that Shafak almost erases all the male characters, the patriarchs, from the stage of the novel. For instance, the emphasis on the upper-case "His" turns into the idea that God might have blood-sisters. All this tension between God as the ultimate image of patriarchal authority and God with blood-sisters is a conscious choice by Shafak. As she argues, there is an "ages-old discrepancy between the exoteric (zahiri) and esoteric (batini) interpretations of the Qur'an" which is little known in the Western world today (2005). She underlines that "this hermeneutical tradition is not well known

by the contemporary reformist, modernist cultural elite of Muslim countries either", particularly in Turkey (Ibid.).

4.5.3. The Emancipated Turkish Woman Discourse of Kemalism and Petite-Ma

Shafak often expresses her annoyance with the unchanged patriarchal and colonialist narrative of the post-Ottoman secular nation-state ideology and the Kemalist cult as is the case with many other scholars. Halil M. Karaveli in his article, "An Unfulfilled Promise of Enlightenment: Kemalism and its Liberal Critics" (2010), argues that though the republican era pioneers attempted to break with the orthodox mentality of the Ottoman-past, their ultimate goal of enlightened modernity was "overrun by the primordial forces of history and tradition" (85). For example, the Presidency of Religious Affairs was founded in 1924 in place of the caliphate, thus re-inventing and giving way to another patriarchal interpretation of religion. With respect to journalist Etyen Mahçupyan, Karavelli notes that, "Kemalism has become a full-fledged religion, replete with its prophet, sacred texts, shrine, and appurtenant rituals" (94). Furthermore, he refers to historian Mete Tunçay who highlights the dogmatism in the Turkish tradition which is shared by both Islamic as well as Westernizing thinking (Ibid.). The sanctification of Atatürk is still today the fundamental fuel of the secularists and also of the dominant Turkish feminist framework. As Shafak says:

> Today in Turkey the Kemalists or leftists have little interest in the past, and the conservatives who seem to be interested in history have little tolerance for critical opinion. I believe it is possible to transcend this polarization. I believe it is possible to be a leftist writer who takes religious philosophy seriously. I refuse to pluck words out of language and memories out of collective identity. I refuse to accept the ongoing memory loss in Turkey. (2005)

"Memory loss" is one of the themes Shafak deals with throughout the novel and which I will deal with after looking at Zeliha's relationship with Petite-Ma, the representative of the religion of love which Shafak touched upon in her story about her grandma quoted earlier, and her secular sister Cevriye and mother Gülsüm.

Petite-Ma is a character who conforms to Maria Lugones' notion of "loving perception". Lugones argues that we should travel between the worlds of women with love. To her, this can only happen if we stop "arrogant perception" (1987: 4). Within the colonial/modern gender system women are perceived through the lenses of arrogance, and as a result women who are perceived arrogantly can abuse other women within the

same social construct (1987: 5). Lugones initiates her learning to love by observing her relationship between herself and her mother. She realizes that she is perceiving her mother with an arrogant perspective which has led to an estrangement from her mother:

> I saw us as beings of quite a different sort. It involved an abandoning of my mother while I longed not to abandon her. I wanted to love my mother, though given what I was taught, "love" could not be the right word for what I longed for. I was disturbed by my not wanting to be what she was. I had a sense of not being quite integrated, my self was missing because I could not identify with her, I could not see myself in her, I could not welcome her world. I saw myself separate from her, a different sort of being, not quite of the same species. (1987: 4)

As a result, she decides to re-think love so that it will contribute to the traveling between worlds and even inhabiting worlds (1987: 11). Those of us who are "world"-travellers, according to Lugones, "have the distinct experience of being different in different "worlds" and of having the capacity to remember other "worlds" and ourselves in them" (Ibid.). Petite-Ma is the main model character for this loving perception: she "had always been capable of loving without suffocating. She would never nag or nitpick or sting. Her protectiveness was not possessive. From time to time she secretly put grains of wheat sanctified with prayers into Asya'a pockets to save her from the evil eye" (*BI* 2006: 128). Interestingly, it is Zeliha not auntie Banu whom Petite-Ma, the grandmother with Alzheimers, chooses as her successor in pouring lead. "I cannot pour lead, I am not even a believer. I am an agnostic!" Zeliha replies (*BI* 2006: 299). Petite-Ma with a decisive attitude answers, "I do not know what that word means, but I can tell it is no good… You have got the talent. Learn the secret" (Ibid.). In reality, Petite-Ma is one of the dislocated female figures in the novel. She is born in Thessaloniki and migrates to Istanbul with her mother: "It was the year 1923. The time Petite-Ma arrived in this city cannot be confused for it coincided with the proclamation of the modern Turkish Republic" (*BI* 2006: 136). She marries Rıza Selim Kazancı, who was abandoned along with his son by his Armenian wife Shushan at a young age. On their marriage Rıza Selim acknowledges that Petite-Ma is the woman to end the old regime in the country and the one in his domestic sphere. Nevertheless, Petite-Ma portrays a distinctive female role in an era and society in which women were experiencing a radical transformation. Instead of making and nursing babies she would be far more interested in playing the piano:

> At a time when Turkish women were going through a radical transformation in the public sphere thanks to a series of social reforms, Petite-Ma was savoring her own independence within the private sphere at home. Though her interest in the piano never diminished, it did

> not take Petite-Ma too long to come up with a list of new diversions. Hence in the years to follow, she would learn French, pen never-to-be-published short stories, excel in different techniques of oil painting, doll herself up in shiny shoes and satin ball gowns, drag her husband to dances, throw crazy parties, and never do a day of housework. Whatever his perky wife asked for, Rıza Selim Kazancı complied with fully. (141)

Meanwhile, Petite-Ma throws parties for the new Republican social and cultural elite and divides her repertoire into two parts: the Western and the Russian. The former would be Mozart or Schumann for government officials and their wives, the latter she keeps to herself. Here the narrator implicitly reveals the Eurocentric perception of the Turkish cultural elite at the time. Within the female sphere, Petite-Ma would belong to none of the groups. In the ladies section of the house Petite-Ma would encounter two types of women: the professionals and the wives of the governmental officials:

> The professionals were the comrade-women, the epitome of the new Turkish female: idealized, glorified, and championed by the reformist elite. These women constituted the new professionals— lawyers, teachers, judges, managers, clerks, academics… Unlike their mothers they were not confined to the house and had the chance to climb the social, economic, and cultural ladder, provided that they shed their sexuality and femininity on the way there. More often than not they wore two-piece suits in browns, blacks, and grays— the colours of chastity, modesty, and partisanship. They had short haircuts, no make-up, no accesories. They moved in defeminized, desexualized bodies… The wives, conversely, came to these invitations wearing satin evening gowns in whites, pasty, pinks, and pastel blues— the hues of ladylikeness, innocence, and vulnerability. They did not like the professionals very much, whom they regarded more as "comrades" than "women", and the professionals did not like them, whom they regarded more as "concubines" than women. In the end nobody found anyone "woman" enough. (140)

Petite-Ma identifies herself with neither group, she adopts the role of a mediator. Whenever the tension between these women intensifies, it is Petite-Ma's mint liquor served in crystal glasses and almond paste sweets which soothes the nerves.

4.5.4. Women of the Secular Camp: Grandma Gülsüm and Auntie Cevriye

Grandma Gülsüm and auntie Cevriye come to the fore as the representatives of the so-called secular camp in the novel. Thus, Grandma Gülsüm is a second generation female character depicted in the narrative who married into the much wealthier Kazancı family as a young rural bride. Her husband Levent Kazancı, an oppressive patriarch, had no compassion for anything or anyone and, according to Petite-Ma, suffered from the fact that his own mother, Shushan, abandoned him as a child. Following the pattern of his father, Levent Kazancı died unexpectedly at a young age. Being a strict and domineering husband and lacking love towards his wife and children, Gülsüm would dedicate herself

to her only son Mustafa "and valued him often at the expense of her daughters, trying to find solace in him for everthing that life had taken from her" (*BI* 2006: 217). Besides her daughter Cevriye, Gülsüm is the other Kazancı female to object to Banu's covering her head, "What kind of nonsense is that? […] Turkish women took off the veil ninety years ago. No daughter of mine is going to betray the rights the great commander-in-chief Atatürk bestowed on the women of this country" (*BI* 2006: 68).

It is also Gülsüm who feels frustration at Zeliha's lack of care in displaying her sexuality and condemns her for being whore-like (*BI* 2006: 29). The second female figure portraying the secular and modern Turkish woman is auntie Cevriye who is a "Turkish national history teacher at a private high school. She always ate healthy, balanced meals an wore her hair in a perfectly pinned chignon that twisted at the nape of her neck without letting even a tangle of hair loose" (*BI* 2006: 23). Cevriye is the complete opposite of Zeliha with regard to her sexuality. Her wearing of her hair perfectly like a Victorian governess gives us a clue about her desexualized nature, like a kind of Jane Eyre. Shafak implicitly scrutinizes the Kemalist (i.e. secular) feminist perspective which tries to wage war against everything related to spirituality, traditions, and sexuality. She also "took it upon herself to crusade against impulsiveness, disruption and spontaneity at home" (*BI* 2006: 30). She is a prototype of the militant "white Turk" feminist paradigm Shafak illustrates this to problematize the nationalist/modernist republican narrative in Turkey:

> Twenty years in her career as a Turkish national history teacher, she was so accustomed to drawing an impermeeable boundary between the past and the present, distinguishing the Ottoman Empire from the modern Turkish Republic, that she had actually heard the whole story as grim news from a distant country. The new state in Turkey had been established in 1923 and that was as far as the genesis of this regime could extend. Whatever might or might not have happened preceding this commencement date was the issue of another era—and another people. (164)

For Cevriye, time, and so history, "moves forward, not backward", and everything related to the Ottoman era belongs to the past and needs to be erased from our social and cultural memories (*BI* 2006: 68).

When Armanoush, the Armenian step-daughter of Mustafa, travels from America to the Kazancı domicile, Cevriye's reaction is that of a typical nationalist comrade Turkish citizen instead of being a host. Asya, as the female Kazancı assigned to accompany Armanoush through her stay is told by auntie Cevriye that it is "her belief that

every Turkish citizen, no matter how ordinary she might be in society, ha[s] a duty to proudly represent the motherland vis-à-vis the whole world" (*BI* 2006: 135). This statement reveals the obsession with representing a Westernized Turkish social imaginary to the outside world. As Cevriye continues: "The problem with us Turks is that we are constantly being misinterpreted and misunderstood. The Westerners need to see that we are not like the Arabs at all. This is a modern, secular state" (*BI* 2006: 135). Cevriye's racist and orientalist attitude towards the Middle East is of course somewhat ironic given that she is a Middle Easterner herself.

I have touched several times upon the notion of the "white Turk" as a way to refer to Turkish orientalism and self-colonization. Cevriye's attitude towards Arab identity is a stereotypical Kemalist reaction. The Turkish Orientalism formed after the establishment of the Republican Turkey is a re-invented version of Ottoman Orientalism:

> Under the liberating effect of these transformations, Turkish Orientalism blossomed in the 1930s. Now that the Arab provinces were lost, Turkish cartoonists could freely vent their scorn for their inhabitants. The same tactic could be used against the domestic enemy, Islam, by ridiculing the Ottoman past, stigmatised as backwards, primitive and reactionary, much like Western anti- Turkish Orientalism had done only decades earlier. In a sense, the republic had brought Ottoman Orientalism to its extreme and unthinkable limit: it wanted to do away with Islam, with tradition, with the Orient, with primitiveness. Its dream was to become modern, secular, homogeneous, united and – white. (Eldem 2010: 28)

Though the reformist Turkish elite tried hard to break with the Ottoman past, they ended up being the continuation of, as Tlostanova (2008: 2) would call it, a "secondary subaltern empire". Nevertheless, within the colonial matrix of power which generates the hubris of the zero point epistemology which the world through the lenses of Eurocentric and colonial/modern perceptions and avoids other system of knowledge, the Turkish Republic would not be able to escape its second-rate imperial past. Within decolonial criticism this is termed imperial difference, on which Tlostanova writes that, "in this case the notion refers to the hierarchy of differences between various empires that was shaped in modernity and within which the capitalist western empires such as Britain, France, Germany claimed the leading roles" (2005: 306). As a result, "the second-rate under-modernized not quite Western or European empires such as the Ottoman Empire or Russia had to satisfy themselves with secondary roles in history" (Ibid.).

The most questionable part of this story of imperial difference is how Turkish society enthusiastically approved and implemented self-exoticisation (i.e. Turkish

Orientalism). Within the last decade a spectacular comeback has taken place in the form of neo-Kemalism as a response to the rise of the conservative Muslim middle-class (Eldem 2010: 31). This phenomenon has also influenced the Turkish feminist framework, thus generating "white Turk" feminism. This state of fetishizing Westernism, modernism, homogenization of society, and becoming "white" has produced a Turkish version of racism which is directed at minorities such as Armenians, Kurds, and Alevites. In *BI*, Cevriye's talk with Asya about their supposed American visitor, Armanoush, adds to this observation in interesting ways:

> The Americans have mostly been brainwashed by the Greeks and the Armenians, who unfortunately arrived in the United States before the Turks did[…] So they are misled into believing that Turkey is the country of the Midnight Express, you will show the American girl what a beautiful country this is, and promote international friendship and cultural understanding. (135)

Endorsing cultural understanding and international friendship is a completely innocent wish. However, promoting it through racism and subalternization of other societies and nations is highly questionable. Ironically, it will appear that Armanoush is an Armenian-American whose grandmother is originally from Turkey which is a crucial point at which the a plot twist deconstructs the entire nationalist narrative which Cevriye has put foward. That Cevriye, without any knowledge about Armanoush's ethnic background, charges Armenians and Greeks for misleading the Americans illustrates how prejudiced and parochial her views are.

4.5.5. The Unfolding of Burdened Stories and the Armenian Exodus

Shafak's positioning of Banu, the soothsayer and mystic sister, as the enunciator who will reveal the tragedy connecting Zeliha's rape to the Armanoush's Grandma Shushan's diasporic experience, can be regarded as a deliberate choice. Banu will see the past through the magic bowl and find out that Zeliha's rapist is her young brother Mustafa. Shafak posits Zeliha's rape as a metaphor for the deportations resulting from the Republican ideology that subalternized minorities like the in through the last years of the Ottoman empire. The author implicitly states that the tendency to break off ties with the imperial past and considering the harm done to communities and subjectivities as bygone will remain a burden until one decides to face it.

Through Banu's djinni we are told that Grandma Shushan was a daughter of the poet and writer Hovhannes Stamboulian. With the uprising of the Ottoman Turkish nationalist officials, which occurred at the same time as the rebellion by the minorities, tension between these groups led to the elimination of Armenian intellectuals including Shushan's father. Shushan is sent to an orphanage where they Turkify her name to Shermin 626. The number illustrates how these minorities are considered through the nationalization process of Turkey. Another historical reality is that these Armenian children like Shushan were made to convert to Islam. Shushan later marries Rıza Selim Kazancı, who later still becomes the husband of Petite-Ma, because of his master Levon. Master Levon was Shushan's uncle and the man who taught him the art of cauldron making. Due to his gratitude towards his master Levon, Rıza Selim proposes to Shushan when he finds her in the orphanage. They get married, but Shushan is unable to detach herself from her ethnic and cultural baggage as an Armenian. Giving birth to her son does not give her feelings of belonging, and one day when her brother finds her and asks her to leave for America she does not think twice, since "the withdrawn but still vivid profiles of her ancestors surfaced. This new name, religion, nationality, family, and self she had acquired had not succeeded in overtaking her true self. The pomegranate brooch whispered her name and it was in Armenian" (*BI* 2006: 327).

The "pomegranate brooch" was the gift supposed to be given to her mother by her father, so it symbolizes Shushan's and her community's painful past. Within Armenian culture the pomegranate represents fertility and marriage. It is the pomegranate brooch upon which Shushan decides to abandon her husband and son Levent, so giving up on her marriage:

> Were it not for the pomegranate brooch, could Shermin Kazancı have ever found the urge to leave her husband and son? It is hard to say. With them she had started a family and a new life with only one direction for it to go in. For her to have a future, she had to become a woman with no past. Her childhood identity was nothing more than morsels of memory, like crumbs of bread she had scattered behind for some bird to nibble on, since she herself would never be able to return the same way back home. Though even the dearest memories of her childhood eventually vanished, the brooch remained vividly ingrained in her mind. (326)

Additionally, the pomegranate is a fruit which conceals over 200 seeds. The seeds, I assume, resemble the Armenian community who are spread around the world as a result

of the exodus. However, the ethnic and cultural baggage they have borne within will always accompany them like Shushan's diasporic experience.

Whereas Shafak is highly critical of Turkish nationalism, she seems to symphatize with the Armenian way of attachment to ethnic and cultural values. What Shafak disapproves of about Turkish nationalism is the systematic othering and the subalternizing of cultural and social minorities. Therefore, that the Turkish reformist isolated themselves from a multi-ethnic, multi-belief, and multi-national past for the sake of a homogeneous nation-state is, according to Shafak, the crucial point from which the social and political tensions in Turkey arise. For her, "Turkey is a country of collective amnesia. Our historical consciousness is scant and therefore we cannot learn lessons from history. The past is important. You should not be trapped in it. But you shouldn't be ignorant of it either" (*Al-monitor* January 14, 2014). She also hints at this collective amnesia within the novel through her portrayal of Cevriye while listening to Armanoush's historical narrative about the Armenian diaspora:

> Twenty years in her career as a Turkish national history teacher, she was so accustomed to drawing an impermeeable boundary between the past and the the present, distinguishing the Ottoman Empire from the modern Turkish Republic, that she had actually heard the whole story as grim news from a distant country. The new state in Turkey had been established in 1923 and that was as far as the genesis of this regime could extend. Whatever might or might not have happened preceding this commencement date was the issue of another era—and another people. (164)

4.5.6. Shafak Exploring the Feminine Through Sufism, "The Religion of Love" and the Image of Water

That Banu is portrayed as a woman who has a tendency towards Sufism is because of Shafak's personal interest in the language of love in the Sufi sect. Sufi thinking is thoroughly grounded in ideas of love and it would not be wrong to associate it with Maria Lugones' "Loving Perception", the escaping from arrogance and building of love between women above all. It is generally through the Sufi narratives that we come to know about female Sufis who were traveling and spreading knowledge to both men and women. The uncovering of such stories and the enunciating of knowledge(s) other than that provided by secular-liberal and Eurocentric narratives which feminist authors such as Shafak offer us disrupts the rhetoric of modernity and the colonial/modern gender system, and open a space of decolonial imaginary. For instance, Sa'diyya Shaikh, who traces female Sufi

mystics through history, refers to a legendary Sufi named Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. 801) who was possibly among the first female Sufis teaching "the doctrine of pure, disinterested love of God for God's own sake" (2009: 13). One day, a group of religious men visit Rābiʿa and declare that all "the virtues have been scattered on the heads of men. The crown of prophet-hood has been placed on men's heads… The belt of nobility has been fas-tened around men's waists. No woman has ever been a prophet" (Ibid.). To this inappropriate approach she calmly replies: "All that is true, but egoism and self-worship and 'I am your Lord' have never sprung from a woman's breast […] All these things have been the specialty of men " (quoted in Shaikh 2009: 54).

Like Shaikh, Shafak is also tracing female images that are mainly invisible in both the secular-nationalist and the conservative Islamist narratives that have reproduced patriarchal perceptions. Shafak's novel is mainly grounded in love, a love between women which would lead Banu to end Zeliha's tragedy by poisoning the last male figure in the family, her brother Mustafa. Banu was already chosen as the female character to re-tell the underlying counter-memories concealed under the dominant historical accounts. Within the novel we realize that there is a special bond between Zeliha and Banu, no matter how contrasting they seem in terms of their way of living. Thus, we come back to the notion of a "religion of love". Shafak in her article on women writers and Islam writes:

> For the dervish, as Ibn Arabi stated, there was no religion more sublime than the religion of love. The Islamic mystic would "follow the religion of Love, whichever way his camels take." Significantly, it was against this background that notions like hell and heaven, sin and virtue lost their meaning. As voiced by Omar Khayyam: "Hell is a spark from our fruitless pain, Heaven a breath from our time of joy." The Sufi exaltation of love at the expense of defiling the teachings of the orthodox-minded resonated with longstanding stories of love deeply embedded in Middle Eastern cultures, such as the tales of Layla and Mejnun, Salaman and Absal, the Moth and the Candle, the Nightingale and the Rose, and, especially, Yusuf and Zulaikha. (2005)

All in all, it seems that the characterization of the female figures and the almost non-existence of male characters is used as a way to re-write forgotten histories, as Susy J. Zepeda would call it, "from rooted, non-heteronormative perspectives" (2014: 120).

In this sense, auntie Banu becomes the image of the decolonial turn which depicts non-modern ways of knowing and proposes delinking them from the heterosexual, racialized, secularized, modernized, and so patriarchal control over the production of knowledge. Thus, unsurprisingly, Banu would demand from Mr Bitter merely "knowledge", but then knowledge "about forgotten events, unidentified individuals, property disputes, family conflicts, unburied secrets, unsolved mysteries" (*BI* 2006: 189). In short, Banu's epistemic subjectivity does not simply claim "knowledge beyond time and space, from the eyes of God", on the contrary, hers can be precisely depicted as the fractured locus in which Banu is both the listener to tales and stories and the story-teller (Grosfoguel 2012: 89).

In this context, both the "water" and the "rain" metaphors are essential throughout the novel because they intersect with Shafak's personal story about her experience with Islam. Banu sees the scenes of the Armenian diaspora and Zeliha's tragedy through a magic bowl filled with water from Mecca, the holiest city in Islam and site of pilgrimage for Muslims. With regard to Shafak's personal story, then, water is related to her Grandmother who would tell her that though religious authorities are rigid and some teaching might appear constraining, these she likens to bricks and the human beings to water: "She is the one who taught me all about water. Love and faith could be just like water, so fluidlike" Shafak writes (2005). It is not surprising, then, that the novel starts and ends up with the rain, and reminds us of Petite-Ma's warning: "Whatever falls from the sky above, thou shall not curse it" (*BI* 2006: 1).

I associate rain and water as metaphors for story-telling and counter-memory. Water is fluid and it is an in-between liquid in that it is colourless but can reflect colours, it is not transparent like light but at the same time we can touch it and feel it. When water or rain drops on a spot, it will expand and slip into holes if any exist. If the official history is the rigid terrain in which other memories, narratives, and stories are absent, story-telling is like water finding its way through the holes and resisting with counter-memories.

When, after many years, Mustafa comes to Istanbul, it is Banu who gives him *ashure* with potassium cynanide mixed in and kills her brother, or rather lets him commit suicide, to save her sister from pain. "What have you done, master?" Mr Bitter croaked

as he broke into a sulky grin, as was expected of him. "You intervened in the way of the world!" (*BI* 2006: 354). Banu is not just given the role of the enunciator as the supposed subaltern in society because of her mysticism, she also has the role of re-telling history from an alternative, namely decolonial, perspetive, and even of re-starting it.

Coincidentally, the *ashure* Banu gives Mustafa to eat is a holy dish in Turkish cuisine which is linked to the prophet Noah and the ark and therefore to the flood and by extension the important theme of water imagery within the novel. It is Banu who narrates the story of Noah:

> Once there was, once there was not, in a land not so far away, the way of the human beings were despicable and the times were bad. After watching this wretchedness for long enough, Allah finally sent a messenger, Noah to correct the people's ways and to give them a chance to repent. But when Noah opened his mouth to preach the truth, nobody listened to him and his words were interrupted by curses… One day God sent him the Angel Gabriel. 'Build a ship,' the angel whispered, 'and take a pair of each species…' Soon the flood came. Allah commanded: 'O sky! Now is the time! Let your water pour down. (305)

After days of sailing the prophet Noah realizes that food has become scarce on the boat. Thus, he calls everyone and tells them to bring whatever they have, "And they did, animals and humans, insects and birds, people of different faiths, they brought whatever little they had left. They cooked all the ingredients together and this concocted a huge pot of Ashure" (*BI* 2006: 305). Thus, *ashure*, as the narrator reveals, symbolizes "continuity and stability, the epitome of the good days to come after each storm, no matter how frightening the storm had been" (*BI* 2006: 272).

However, *ashure* does not seem to have just a single meaning within *BI*, as another meaning it carries is to infer that the past, the present, and the future are always linked to each other and a collective amnesia like that which dominates Turkish society merely produces delusions. Thus, when Banu comes to Mustafa's room with a bowl of *ashure* and puts it right beside his bed and leaves, he knows "why it was placed there and what exactly he was asked to do" (*BI* 2006: 336). As Barsam Tchakhmakhchian's sister Auntie Surpun claims, "The past lives within the present", which is obviously the central subject of *BI* and reverses the linearity of time implemented by colonial/modern power structures on the Turkish society, for example the omission of the Armenian exodus, diaspora, and its outcomes.

With constant allusion to traumatic personal and collective memories via images like the *ashure* and objects like the pomegranate brooch left by Shushan to her son Levent before she left for America in the hope he would remember, Shafak aims to dismantle the rigidity of dominant official narratives and also the imaginary secular, modern, western, purely Turkish identity. The pomegranate and the *ashure* with its close relation to Noah's flood serve as images of memory, rememberance, and so resistance. Therefore, it is no coincidence that a cook of a restaurant Armanoush and Asya come across in Istanbul likens the the Ottoman empire's one-time capital to a "city-boat", thus alluding to Noah's ark, a vessel carrying a myriad of beings. As the cook remarks:

> This city was so cosmopolitan once […] We had Jewish neighbors, lots of them. We also had Greek neighbors, and Armenian neighbors […] As a boy I used to buy fish from Greek fishermen. My mother's tailor was Armenian. My father's boss was Jewish. You know we were all intermingled. (*BI* 170)

For him, Istanbulites live in a vessel in which all settlers are in fact passengers. Regarding Shafak's unveiling of the past and linking of it to the present with the aspiration of resisting, fixing, and categorizing oppressive discourses, Özlem Öğüt Yazıcıoğlu writes:

> As Shafak depicts with remarkable use of humor and irony the conflict between the characters' sense of belonging and non-belonging, be it in the context of nation, religion or patriarchy, she undermines the totalizing, categorizing and 'otherizing' discourses of such institutions so as to posit a notion of identity as multiple, processual and transformational. Identity as such bears the imprint of the discourses, which, in their ongoing interactions and contradictions, shape and reshape it, yet opens itself to various others, which constantly transform and re-inscribe it. That process inevitably involves a dynamic interaction between the self and the 'other' as well as the past and the present, rather than a separation from the 'other' or a break with the past […]. (2009: 59)

For the main characters in *BI* it is impossible to escape the past and familial, national, and/or social boundaries because all these elements are totally interrelated elements that can be combined and re-combined in various and endless ways (Ibid.). Therefore, in the novel there is a conscious emphasis on the fluidity of any belief, subjectivity, time, and the spatio-temporal dimension of knowledge built on a hierarchal structure that corresponds with the image of water.

The re-appearance of rain represents the necessity of offering a decolonial feminist standpoint that manifests the fluidity of subjectivity, time, space, and knowledge. Regarding Shafak's standpoint, Öğüt Yazıcıoğlu argues that the author consciously puts emphasis on the multicultural interactions of her characters. She also adds that Shafak in

her fictional works observes diasporic and so "migrant groups' or individuals' processes of coming to terms with their past and its marks upon their identity" (2009: 69):

> By pointing to the contradictions, changes and transformations in both individual and collective experiences and histories, which constitute identity, she displays the inexhaustible variety and adaptability of identity, whose conception as such will no doubt challenge monolithic, essentialist and totalizing discourses on nation, race and ethnicity, so as to pave the way for a more peaceful and mutually enriching social, cultural, and political interaction. (Ibid.)

Nevertheless, the Öğüt Yazıcıoğlu's interpretation on Shafak's supposedly underlying logic in her fiction does not really call for complete ambiguity in terms of identity which may lead to the blurring of significant differences. The online dialogue which Armanoush, the Armenian-American grand-daughter, has with diaspora Armenians on the subject of "plurality" reveals Shafak's literary standpoint, "For most Armenians in the diaspora, Hai Dat is the sole psychological anchor that we have in order to sustain an identity […] we are all Americans and Armenians, that plurality is good as long as we do not lose our anchor" (*BI* 2006: 117). To this statement, the main Armenian character, Armanoush, confesses that while "plurality means the state of being more than one", for her the state of in-betweenness is much more complicated (Ibid.):

> I need to find my identity. You know what I have been secretly contemplating? Going to visit my family's house in Turkey. Grandma always talks about this gorgeous house in Istanbul. I will go and see it with my own eyes. This is a journey into my family's past, as well as into my future. (Ibid.)

Obviously, Shafak is not promoting a kind of pure abstract cosmopolitanism; on the contrary, there is a manifestation of a multicultural lifestyle that is formed and enacted through local, cultural, and ethnic aspects of an individual. Her approach differs from nationalism or ethnicism, and is instead calling for a subjectivity that is nourished by local and ethnic features without any tendency towards a dichotomous and hierarchical logic. Therefore, when it comes to the individual and collective experiences of the Armenian and Turkish female characters in *BI*, Shafak chooses to intermingle the past with the present and future.

Consequently, I would connect the use of rain as the initiating and ending metaphor in the text to Lugones' decolonial feminist notions (i.e. world traveling and loving perception), and argue that there is an interplay between this collaboration and Shafak's fundamental emphasis on Sufism, the religion of love. As I emphasized a few

paragraphs earlier with reference to Lugones, I would argue that feminism should ontologically and epistemologically put special emphasis on love between women no matter their race, culture, class, and so on. Therefore, I uphold the idea that Shafak, through a fictional intersection between Sufism (i.e. the religion of love), the rain image, and decolonial feminist perceptions like the "loving perception" explores and unveils the female voice and image which had become alienated asa result of the dominant "white Turk" feminist framework. In parallel with this, she implicitly problematizes the still powerful social imaginary imposed by Kemalism in Turkey.

4.6. Conclusion

Contrary to the assumed patriarchal and nationalist mentality, mainly constructed by the republican elite decades ago, Shafak with her work *The Bastard of Istanbul* and the female characters she has portrayed within it resist dominant official narratives and bring to the fore traumatic personal and collective counter-memories. She puts forth an alternative feminist rhetoric, namely a decolonial feminist perception that is highly aware of the modern/colonial gender system and its colonial power matrix that, within the Turkish context, covers nationalism, orientalism, patriarchy, a Turkish form of the colonization of particular subjectivities, geographies, beliefs, and cultures.

When in *BI* Rıza Kazancı, a dedicated citizen and shrewd businessman of the Turkish Republican period, decides to marry the converted Armenian girl Shushan, he is convinced that eventually she will forget her traumatic story:

> He was convinced that if he treated her nicely and dotingly, and gave her a child and a magnificent home, she would bit by bit forget her past and her wound would ultimately heal. It was just a matter of time. Women cannot keep carrying the burden of their childhood once they themselves give birth to a child, he reasoned. (356)

In fact, Shushan never forgets her past and follows her brother to America to join her Armenian compatriots in the diaspora. Remembering the past in Shushan's condition is a call for resistance. When the narrator depicts the old Grandma Shushan's (i.e. Tchakhmakhchian's) household, one encounters all sorts of decorations, paintings like Martiros Saryan's *Still Life with Masks*, and icons. In particular, Shushan's silver pendant of Saint Anthony that she always wore serves the same purpose in bringing back the past: "The patron saint of lost articles had helped her numerous times in the past to cope with the losses in her life" (*BI* 2006: 52).

In *BI* the past emerges as a form of resistance and rebellion, adopted by female characters like Grandma Shushan, which brings us back to Auntie Banu's role as a mediator between the stories of the two families, Kazancı and Tchakhmakhchian, and of the idiosyncratic female characters. The Sufi female character Banu Kazancı fictionally mends the broken ties between past and present by connecting the silenced Armenian diaspora and their collective history to the Turkish history. As narrated in the novel, "The past is anything but bygone". When a nation-state is built upon an imagined community which ostracizes various subjectivities, communities, geographies and cultures, the revival of their stories is for sure inevitable. In this way, the author dismantles the dominant and imaginary official accounts which have also deeply influenced the Turkish feminist framework.

As a result, by giving the mystic Auntie Banu, a non-conforming figure so far as the republican social imaginary is concerned, the responsibilty of revealing and concluding the tragedy of both the Kazancı and Tchakhmakhchian women is possibly Shafak's humorous, deconstructive, and so decolonial choice in re-writing history and putting forward a counter-discourse. Therefore, one of the last sentences in the novel reads, "Life is coincidence, though sometimes it takes a *djinni* to fathom that" (*BI* 2006: 356). Indeed, Auntie Banu is provided with her knowledge about the Kazancı and Tchakhmakhchian females' past thanks to her djinni Mr Bitter. If patriarchal official history is the rigid terrain from which other memories, narratives, and stories are removed, Auntie Banu's mediating role as the story-teller and clairvoyant woman provides an alternative way to punch holes in and resist it.

Additionally, though there is a massive difference between Auntie Banu and Zeliha in terms of life-style and beliefs, the former thoroughly ignores these and crosses mental and spiritual borders to save her sister from her pain. As Armanoush explores the complete difference between the two, it comes as a shock to be welcomed at the Istanbul airport by Zeliha who was "wearing an outrageously short skirt and even more outrageously high heels", and meeting Banu "afterward in a head scarf and a long dress" (*BI* 2006: 154). She is also surprised to learn that "the two women, despite the stark contrast in their appearance and obviously in their personalities, were sisters living under the same roof was a puzzle Armanoush figured she would have to work on for a while" (Ibid.).

In reality, that Banu is the only female character to cover her head invokes another aspect of *BI*'s fictional decolonial feminist approach. The stark contrast between the two women does not prevent any coalition building, solidarity, and recognition. On the contrary, the novel seems to celebrate their difference on equal terms and never approaches both women with any hierchical feminist perception. This feature recalls Lugones' world-traveling, that is the traveling between cultures, races, ethnicities, and various subjectivities, "Those of us who are 'world'-travelers have the distinct experience of being different in different 'worlds' and of having the capacity to remember other 'worlds' and ourselves in them." (1987: 11). Evidently, she does not call for a feminist perception that proposes a melting pot in which there emerges the risk of dominating discourse. On the contrary, hers is a way of first seeing the colonial/imperial difference and the modern/colonial gender system which is definitely a decolonial feminist approach.

Chapter 5

Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* and *Life is a Caravanserai*: Exploring Decolonial Strategies and Contesting the Colonial/Modern Gender System

> Why am I compelled to write? [...] Because the world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me. By writing I put order in the world, give it a handle so I can grasp it. I write because life does not appease my appetites and anger [...] To become more intimate with myself and you. To discover myself, to preserve myself, to make myself, to achieve self-autonomy. To dispell the myths that I am a mad prophet or a poor suffering soul. To convince myself that I am worthy and that what I have to say is not a pile of shit... Finally I write because I'm scared of writing, but I'm more scared of not writing.
>
> Gloria Anzaldua, *Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers.*

5.1 Introducing Diasporic Writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar, a Turkish-born Tale-Gatherer and Blasphemer

Emine Sevgi Özdamar, author of *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei: hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus* (*Life is a Caravanserai: Has Two Doors I Came in One I Went out The Other*) (1992) and *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn* (*The Bridge of Golden Horn*) (1998), occupies a unique position with regard to her unveiling counter-memories/tales of Turkish women coming from various diasporas, communities, places, and minorities. In this way Özdamar attempts to resist and challenge how Turkish and German official narratives have concealed and even consciously erased subjectivities, communities, and geographies which do not fit.

The novels are originally written in German, but adopt a narrative that literally translates Turkish expressions into German while remaining word for word in the German language. Leslie Adelson (2005), Bettina Brandt (2004), and Yasemin Yıldız (2008) have analyzed how Özdamar's German narrative resonates with underlying Turkish proverbs and expressions literally translated into German such as "*baumwolltante*". On this, Luise von Flotow in her article, "Life is a Caravanserai: Translating Translated Marginality, a Turkish-German Zwittertext in English" (2000: 67), writes:

> … the best friend of the narrator's mother, the woman who puts the sixteen-year-old on the train to her father shortly before the narrator's birth, is referred to throughout as "*Baumwolltante*". There is no explanation for this strange name, which translates into English as "Cotton Aunt." Only a Turkish reader can translate back into Turkish and get the joke: "*Baumwolltante*" translates a colloquial Turkish term for the madame of a whorehouse.

Another example is "*würmer ausschütteln*" which translates into English as "shaking out worms" but evokes no meaning in German or English. The protagonist of both novels rarely explains the meanings of Turkish expressions, but "*würmer ausschütteln*" is an exception: "*Würmer ausschütteln bedeutete bummeln gehen, sich amüsieren*" (85, tr. "Shaking out worms means going for a walk, having fun"). Flotow describes this sort of language usage as "broken German" (2000: 66). While this affirms a certain collectivity of Turkish expression in Germany, it also evokes the history of its speakers, *Gastarbeiters*, a history of domination and marginalization (Ibid.). For Flotow this leads to political immediacy (2000: 67):

> There is a clear political immediacy in writing in 'broken' German and thereby representing a minority/migrant population. Much of this type of 'minority' writing has previously signalled attempts to make room for other voices in Germany, and give voice to the concerns and experiences of outsiders, often as a kind of "therapeutic writing by victims of social processes" which thematizes their minority status. Özdamar both uses and undermines this topos. By writing in Turkish German she represents the minority group, but by setting her work in the country of origin she moves this group into a majority position. The Germans are the ones who are marginally present—as occasional hapless tourists or as labour recruiting agents easily duped by Turkish job applicants. The text is both a politically immediate act and a playful attenuation of the act.

Most importantly, Flotow several times emphasizes an essential feature of Özdamar's distinctive narrative (i.e. broken German) within her novels which also explains why I do not primarily insert the German text into my dissertation, but instead use the English translation. For instance, the text is full of Turkish and transliterated Arabic expressions such as "Bismillahirrahmanirrahim" (tr. in the name of God) remain as outlandish in English as they are in the original German version (Flotow 2000: 71):

> Left in their original Turkish form in the English translation, they pose no difficulty for translation, functioning in similar ways in both German and English, consistently signalling the otherness of the source culture, the difference from which the newly 'broken' German/ English has been distilled.

Flotow even argues that the English translation of the "Turkish-German Zwittertext", thereby referring to the texts' hybrid narrative, produces colourful and unexpected images that provide a similarly humourous aspect as in the German text (Flotow 2000: 70):

> For example, the narrator falls ill with tuberculosis and is taken off to Bursa, a city renowned for its clean air; here she expects to get better soon: "Die Luft vom Heiligen Berg in Bursa wird meine wunden Lungen wie von einem heiligen großen Vogel geleckt wieder zumachen" (113, tr. "The air from the Holy Mountain of Bursa will close my sore lungs as though licked by a great holy bird.") Birds that heal wounds by licking them are not a staple of German or English mythical images.

Regarding this Flotow observes with reference to Deniz Göktürk that such outlandish and exotic imagery paves way to 'orientalist' clichés (Flotow 2000: 71). However, such criticism appears to be a hasty judgement. That Özdamar is running the risk of subscribing to a contruction of an exotic Other strongly ignores the postcolonial (Littler 2002), the postmonolingual (Yıldız 2012), and the decolonial aspect of Özdamar's fiction.

Thus, further information on Özdamar's intellectual stance and the socio-political struggle she went through will provide the reader with a clearer picture of her literature. As a diasporic and/or exilic writer Özdamar represents the first group of Turkish guest workers who moved to Germany. Özdamar first moved to West Berlin in 1965 as a factory worker. In 1967 she moved back to Turkey to study drama, but returned to Germany after the military coup in 1971 to work as an actress and an assistant director with Benno Besson at the Volksbühne. In the following years she wrote her first play, *Karagöz in Alamania,* and published a prose version entitled *Mother Tongue*. In 1992 she published her first novel, *Life is a Caravanserai*, in German which was the first book in a trilogy. This novel is highly significant as it won the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize and gave rise to controversies since Özdamar was the first non-native speaker of German selected by the jury for the primary award (Jankowsky 1997: 262). However, her achievement and the critical reception of her novel uncovered ingrained ethnicist, orientalist, and hegemonic biases of the critics and reviewers of the time. On this Karen Jankowsky (1997: 263) writes:

> When such relationships between the margins and the center are not questioned, the cultivation of knowledge about disparate cultures legitimates the dominant group's hegemony, because this group's values and characteristics will be more highly appraised. In this way, accentuating the "Turkishness" of Özdamar's text emphasizes differences between Turkey and Germany. This binary thinking valorizes culture from Germany or Europe as Christian and enlightened and lessens the worth of culture from Turkey as reflecting Moslem fundamentalism, as being particularly patriarchal, and as lacking in modernity.

Being thoroughly aware of her Otherness, Özdamar declared, "I was accepted, but merely as a 'guest-writer'" (quoted in Jankowsky 1997: 261). Thanks to an increasing amount of scholarship, literary critics have come to comprehend the sociological and aesthetic qualities of her writing. As Ela Eylem Gezen notes with reference to Leslie Adelson, such literature on Turkish migration, besides possessing unique aesthetics properties, also functions as a collection of "transparent sociological documents" (2012: 29). For all that, Özdamar's novels open up a literary site in which she uses language and her narrative as the entry point into the sporadic recognition and reconciliation of not just different but in fact clashing cultures, spheres, and identities. Thus, she challenges the stereotyping and subalternizing representation of immigrant, working class, rural, Anatolian, traditional, and spiritual women which offers a remarkable fictional response to the deadlock faced by current Turkish feminist paradigms.

Contrary to the alleged self-orientalizing 'white-washed' Turkish feminist paradigm and the purely modernist, nationalist, and secular state policies that have disregarded and ignored the presence of certain identities, through Özdamar's novels these female images pop out. Despite Özdamar's employment of feminist strategies, one has to bear in mind that she, in fact, "is not concerned with uncovering or constructing a feminist history, aesthetic, or didactic" (Ghaussy 1999: 9). In this connection, Sohelia Ghaussy cites Özdamar's response to the question of whether her literary attempt at depicting powerful women aims to deconstruct the Orientalist Western stereotypes of oppressed Islamic women:

> *Daran habe ich nicht gedacht, sondern nur an meine Figuren und an meine Liebe für meine Figuren. Und im Alltag gibt es natürlich diese kräftige Frauenwelt, wie es eine Männerwelt gibt, gibt es auch eine Frauenwelt und irgendwie ist das ja auch ein Matriarchat. Aber man kann die Differenz von zwei unterschiedlichen Erfahrungen nicht diskutieren.* (quoted in Ghaussy: 9)

Though Özdamar indicates that she never consciously considered portraying dominant female characters on the basis of any feminist framework, she does not reject her particular emphasis on a distinctively female-centred literature. Her exclusive focus on various female identities and feminine spaces appears to be a revelation and dismantling of the cliched sexual and gender norms.

Most importantly, the female images she portrays are basically marked with obscurity and suppression within the colonial/modern gender system in association with

the colonial/imperial difference. As argued in previous chapters, the colonial/imperial difference is a phrase labeled by a recent approach termed "decoloniality" or "decolonial thinking". The approach is related to the concept of "the coloniality of being" whose logic Walter Mignolo defines according to the assumptions of the modernity/coloniality project. According to decolonialist theorists the rhetoric of modernity possesses organic ties with apparatuses such as secularism, progressivism, and emancipation. As a whole, all these structures are founded on the internal history of Europe and North America with its language of progress and newness (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 10). Middle Eastern countries like Turkey have become the ambitious off-springs of this imperial and colonial consciousness, thus leading to a coercive implementation of social and political tools like modernization and secularization on the peoples of the reformist Turkish Republic.

In the course of the transition from a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional, and multi-national Ottoman empire to a modern Turkish nation-state, the female body and sexuality became the primary image of these changes. Thus, the major social and political transformations involved a highly gendered and sexualized mission which Deniz Kandiyoti describes as, "gendering the modern" (1997). In a similar way, Beverly M. Weber argues that Özdamar's narrative has implicit affinities with the attempt of a small number of contemporary feminist scholars to problematize the modernity package envisioned by republican elites who insisted on "a modernity which used the female figure in public spaces to demonstrate its 'Europeanness' while denying women significant political power" (2010: 48).

Özdamar's novels tacitly portray the conflicted position of women in the scope of modernization, westernization, and the Kemalist discourse. Her works broadly focus on the tension between Islamic and other local traditions and the Kemalist ideology that is representative of the Eurocentric modern/colonial/capitalist/patriarchal world system imposed on Turkey by its secular elites. She employs traditional aesthetic forms as literary models, such as gathering folk-tales and stories (particularly from her grandmother), Arabic prayers, and idioms which she translates from Turkish into German verbatim. The reader constantly comes across poems, idioms, dreams, folk-songs, and rituals. Writing outside the nation, as Azade Seyhan would call it, and thus inhabiting the role of the border drifter, Özdamar contests and shifts national and cultural boundaries. This state of

in-betweenness provides her with a territory, a third space, on a threshold where she can re-write the political and cultural memory of both Turkey and German.

The intertwining of aesthetic and political strategies does not only address various framings of the East/West problematic of the Turkish diaspora in Germany, "a country where citizenship has long been measured by *ius sanguinis* (a law of blood lineage or familial descent)" (Ergin 2009: 90). The *auslander* rhetoric is in a manner superseded by Özdamar who, as Kader Konuk observes, has put an effort into the "transnationalization of the German memory culture". At the same time, however, she also sets forth a resistance against the amnesia surrounding Turkey's multicultural socio-political history. This state of amnesia by the reformist elitists towards a multi-cultural history engendered essentialist, discriminatory, and openly racist politics towards religion (in particular Islam), local traditions, and other cultural elements which had close links to non-European perceptions. I consider this to be a of as self-colonialism or even self-orientalism which propagates an East/West and thus colonial logic of dichotomy.

Meliz Ergin writes that the underlying politics of Özdamar's narrative is to re-visit "the question of self-colonialism experienced within Turkey vis-à-vis the West in the context of the borderline cultures, where the social realities of two nations variously intersect, overlap, and diverge" (2009: 86). Likewise, Azade Seyhan writes, "When exile becomes a condition of critical reflection, its writers find the narrative and cultural coordinates to offer another version of their lands' history, a version free of official doctrine and rhetoric, a history of the actual human cost of transformation and migration" (2000: 20). Notwithstanding Özdamar's exploration of the notion of difference in terms of ethnicity, belonging, recognition, and the East/West binary, she also puts forward a "poetical use of non-normative female and feminized bodies" that implicitly criticizes the female image within the secular social imaginary, particularly in Turkey, which has also become an ingrained aspect of the Turkish feminist framework (Klocke 2007: 253).

In order to provide context to my own exploration of Özdamar's novels and to my view of her as a tale-gatherer and 'blasphemer' (as I have put it in the title of this chapter), I will first set out an analytical framework which draws on decolonial feminism as well as Roland Barthes' notion of the death of the author. In the essay of the same name, Barthes writes: "Once an action is recounted, for intransitive ends, and no longer in order

to act directly upon reality — that is, finally external to any function but the very exercise of the symbol — this disjunction occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters his own death, writing begins" (1967: 2). Here Barthes differentiates the Western perception of the author from the story-tellers of other societies and so argues that the author is a modern day invention. As he goes on to say:

> Nevertheless, the feeling about this phenomenon has been variable; in primitive societies, narrative is never undertaken by a person, but by a mediator, shaman or speaker, whose "performance" may be admired (that is, his mastery of the narrative code), but not his "genius" The author is a modern figure, produced no doubt by our society insofar as, at the end of the middle ages, with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, or, to put it more nobly, of the "human person" Hence it is logical that with regard to literature it should be positivism, resume and the result of capitalist ideology, which has accorded the greatest importance to the author's "person". (Ibid.)

Interestingly, Barthes' approach evokes a highly decolonial perspective which has fundamental contributions to make to the criticism of Western supremacism, very much like Franz Fanon. Chela Sandoval in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (1997) posits Barthes as one of the first white Western critical theorists to put forward "a quite contemporary and decolonial critical criticism" (96). Additionally, Sandoval writes:

> In finding the dominant social rhetoric that functions in the mode of a language, the poses for subjectivity available to dominating classes, Barthes hoped to undo the effects of being a citizen/subject in Euro-American Western culture; to undermine the subject positions legitimate, 'bourgeois' citizens; to cite these poses and their languages as comfortable masquerades for identity. (Ibid.)

Strikingly, Barthes' point of view about authorship/authority in association with the masqueraded subjecvitities that are engendered by the Euro-American Western culture, seems to have affinities with Özdamar's semi-autobiographical trilogy (of which this thesis discusses only two) originally written in German.[9] For instance, Özdamar plays with the German language in such a way that even a German reader would find it hard to understand. This way she dismantles notions of purity and origin on a linguistic level but brings forth implicit criticism of the imaginary communities (i.e. nation-states) that are

[9] The final part of the trilogy, *Seltsame Sterne* (2003), is about the female author's professional life in her late twenties between East and West Berlin as Benno Besson's assistant at the Volksbühne. I only focus on the first two novels because these look into a myriad female figures such as Anatolian and working-class women. *Seltsame Sterne*, by contrast, is mainly composed in a diary form which "is largely marked by factual prose style and does not come across as a work of fiction" (Pizer 2008: 135).

products of the re-invented hegemonic power structures within an assumed post-empire era.

Following this, John Berger in his foreword to Özdamar's *The Golden Horn* (1998) indicates that story-tellers like Özdamar fill an emptiness: "Stories never concur with the official version of those visibly in power. The story-teller by contrast is invisible except when telling her or his story" (Berger 2007: ix). Özdamar's story-teller literary standpoint which I relate to Barthes' and Sandoval's ideas on authorship as a Eurocentric invention has a close affinity with the Ottoman Turkish theatrical art performed by a single storyteller, *meddah*. *Meddah* mimics various characters, languages, and dialects of various communities within Ottoman society and is mainly performed in places like caravanserais and coffeehouses. Indeed, Özdamar is also an actress and a theatre player and thus a performer like the *meddah.* Correspondingly, a variety of scholars (e.g. Mani 2003, Gezen 2012, and Konuk 1999) have analyzed Özdamar's use of elements of theatrical traditions in her novels. Regarding the *meddah* image, Gezen draws attention to Kader Konuk's emphasis on Özdamar's "staged speech" ("inszeniertes Sprechen") which refers to the novelist's "staging of accented German in *Die Brücke*" (2012: 136). On this, in *Rapture and Revolution: Essays on Turkisk Literature* (2007: 110), Talat Halman writes:

> Using secular topics and tales, the Meddahs, became storytellers with their repertoire concentrating on heroic deeds, daily life of their regions and communities, gnomic tales, and exhortations. Gradually satire started to form the core of their programs: humorous anecdotes about human foibles, impersonations of stock types as well as familiar individuals mockery of social mores and guarded or open stabs at people in high office, including sometimes the sultan.

Though her novels are considered semi-autobiographical, Özdamar, very much like the *meddah*, is mainly the invisible story-teller whose voice appears to be immensely feminine but does not appear very often, "She can talk about sex like a man. She talks about dreams like a child. She talks about cruelty of the existent like a grandparent. Her voice changes age from sentence to sentence. And what is between its legs changes too" (Berger 2007: x).

Now that the notion of the tale-gatherer is articulated, I continue with the notion of the "blasphemer" as employed with reference to Özdamar before continuing with the novels. In this way the subtexts of the novels would be more explicit and so

understandable while elaborating on them. Therefore, initially a somewhat detailed preface about the construction of the secular social imaginary and the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world−system" is essential. Beforehand, it is also necessary to echo my fundamental goal which is to gather hints about the female sexuality, body and subjectivity with a decolonial feminist perspective, namely the modern/colonial gender system, to explore the impasse Turkish feminist paradigms go through with close relation to the just referred secular social imaginary.

So, if to glance back to the historical and social process of modernization, secularization and the Turkification implemented by the Kemalist elites from a decolonial feminist perspective, we realize that the female sexuality, subjectivity and body obtained a central role. The process of shifting and rooting which Metin Heper entitles as the "cognitive revolution", was expected to lead in time to a cultural revolution that was essentially not concerned with women's subjectivity in general but with her attire and visibility in the social imaginary (2009: 414). The unquestionable adoption of the European model of modernity still today runs the risk of slavishly fostering Eurocentric perspectives like perceiving it as a religion with its shrines, rituals and sacred spaces (Çınar 2005: 4). Thereby, Kemalist feminists have considered themselves as the missionaries, ironically, of the secularizing and modernizing project. The founding father Atatürk, whose name means "father of the Turks", has been attributed a godlike status which Ahmet Altan observes is a shield used by "those who are blocking discussions on many deformities in this country" (quoted in Tavernise 2008). The irony already lies in the notions Atatürk and Kemalism, both refer to a patriarchal authority of an imagined community and so nation.

As Christopher de Bellaigue puts it, Atatürk had spent "his presidency encouraging his people to regard the old empire as a backward despotism whose guiding ideology, Islam, had prevented its Turkish elite from keeping up with Western technological and economic progress—a paralysis that would be cured by his own modernizing, secularizing reforms" (2001). Due to the aggressive and repressive quality of the alleged cognitive revolution that condemned the Ottoman patriarchy by emphasizing how the reformist founding fathers had offered women emancipation, challenging epistemological and methodological feminist criticism against the Kemalist discourse did not take place until the eighties in Turkey.

Nevertheless, the Kemalist ideology, which has functioned through the imposition of a dichotomous logic, is an inescapable legacy that has artificially delineated "the social and political border between national 'insiders' and the non-national 'outsiders'" (Göknar 2013: 69). The truth is that the non-national 'outsider' does not merely correspond with the Kurdish and many other so-called non-Turkish minorities who have faced social and political suppression from a nation-state that willingly acquired a colonial aspect. The project of nation-state making, that is, putting secularism into discourse and practice, was initiated with the removal of any religious element from political and social discourse. However, the republic was built on the ashes of an empire that inherited a number of collective identities (e.g. Islamists, Alevis) whose public representation was completely rejected from the modern social imaginary. Accordingly, Fuat Keyman cites Casanova as follows, "ultimately the project of constructing such a (secular) nation-state from above is likely to fail because it is too secular for the Islamists, too Sunni for the Alevis and too Turkish for the Kurds" (2007: 225). Thus, the still on-going tension between the nationalist communities and Kurds, Alevis, and other minorities in Turkey seems to be clear proof of the failure to which Keyman and Casanova refer.

As I argue throughout the dissertation, the female body and sexuality has become the touchstone of the top-down modernization and secularization project. The modern state's homogenizing discourse demanded that women be the makers and foremost markers of the secular public sphere. Nilüfer Göle in *Political Islam: A Critical Reader* (2011) writes that secularism is an essential element of the modernization phenomenon and works as a social imaginary in which "women as public citizens and women's rights are more salient than citizenship and civil rights" (225). Nevertheless, ending the spatial separation of sexes, removing the veil, and emancipating women from both religion and also traditions re-produced different levels of gender relations. Göle argues that secularism is enacted "through gendered, corporeal, and spatial performances. In this respect, some common spaces are transformed as they gain additional symbolic value and become public sites of visual modernity and gendered secular performances" (Ibid.). Besides the Parliament, this is also true of schools, work places and "spaces such as beaches, opera and concert halls, coffeehouses, fashion shows, public gardens, and public transportation all become sites for modern self-presentations" (Ibid.). To Göle all these "are instituted and imagined as public spaces through these daily micropractices in which

men and women rehearse and improvise in public their new self-presentations, dress codes, bodily postures, aesthetic, and cultural tastes, and leisure activities" (Ibid.). In the wake of the social, cultural and political transformation that adressed women's bodies and sexuality, it appears that an alarming version of patriarchy and discriminatory oppressive power structures have been re-produced.

All this would also lead us to the "politics of belonging" and the question of the boundaries of belonging as Nira Yuval-Davis discusses in her paper entitled *Power, Intersectionality and the Politics of Belonging* (2011). The notion of social and political belonging is not just associated with state citizenship, it is "impossible to understand state citizenship without analyzing the multi-layered structures of people's citizenships that include, in intersectional ways, citizenships of sub, cross and supra-state political communities" (6). But then do the rights of the citizen include simply mean the rights of man? Indeed, Walter Mignolo discusses the most troubling aspect of the "rights of man", which is that the initial signs of citizenship and the politics of belonging correspond with the growing and expanding justification of colonialism and imperialism through the discourse of the "civilizing mission".

In his article entitled *Citizenship, Knowledge, and the Limits of Humanity* (2006), Mignolo notes that, "The figure of the "citizen" presupposed an idea of the "human" that had already been formed during the Renaissance and was one of the constitutive elements of the colonial matrix of power" (2006: 312). Through a symposium held by OECUMENE, an international team of researchers based at the Open University in UK, he characterizes his above mentioned argument as follows, "The modern, secular, European enlightened notion of citizenship in a mono-national state colonized pluri-versal senses of belonging, invented the idea of citizens and subjected them to the law of the state" (*The Second Symposium: Deorientalizing Citizenship?* November 12, 2012). The production of homogeneous citizens belonging to the same ethno-class is where citizenship comes forward as a notion intertwined with the coloniality of being. Ramón Grosfoguel depicts this affiliation with reference to the rhetoric of modernity:

> Coloniality is not equivalent to colonialism. It is not derivative from, or antecedent to, modernity. Coloniality and modernity constitute two sides of a single coin. The same way as the European industrial revolution was achieved on the shoulders of the coerced forms of labor in the periphery, the new identities, rights, laws, and institutions of modernity such as nation-states, citizenship and democracy were formed in a process of colonial interaction

> with, and domination/exploitation of, non-Western people ("Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality" 2008)

Elaborating on this affiliation within the frame of decoloniality, Grosfoguel wraps up the hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms in brief with one phrase, the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (Grosfoguel 2007: 213)

Taking all this into account, within the Turkish context belonging is deeply related to how modernity is performed and how this corresponds with ethnic identity, namely being nothing but a "secular/modern/Westernized Turk". As a matter of fact, this has resulted in unhealable splits in society, that is and various groups of people, specifically women, being underrepresented, silenced, and deprived of their subjectivities.

Erdag Göknar defines this illusionary dichotomous logic grounded mainly on the binaries public/elite, center/periphery, modern/tradition or religion with the phrase "turning Turk" that, confusingly, embodies a dual combination of both an Islamic and a secular state of being. In its early articulations "turning Turk" referred to the act of converting to Islam, reflecting its link with religion and the Ottoman Empire (2013: 243). However, the republican elites' nationalization (i.e. Turkification) takeover contributed to the process of the eradication of religious, cultural, and traditional symbols evoking Eastern/Oriental values and discourses from the social and political sphere and thus redefined the connotations of the phrase "turning Turk" to prioritize ideological conversion. While previously "Turk" meant the non-Western Islamic standpoint, the Kemalist discourse strived hard to cut all ties with Eastern and/or Muslim origins and became obsessed with proving links with the White/Western civilization.

Nevertheless, the self-colonization of the Western-oriented elites has never provided them the status of being recognized as insiders in the Western world with regard to race, geography, and culture. On the contrary, "they could always remain as 'enlightened natives'. In other words, "modern" Turkey was accepted as a useful outsider and an incorporated weak partner for the West, and has stayed as such until now" (Gökay 2014). Interestingly, still today the self-perceptions, especially of secularized and modernized individuals in Turkey, "have remained closely rooted in the identity-formation processes of those early days, the days of the 1920s and 30s" (Ibid.).

The so-called epoch-making turn towards the West, unfortunately, has led to the coloniality of gender, as Lugones would call it, and with the colonial matrix of power which embodies the criticism of the modern/colonial power structures. How the coloniality of gender in association with women's role in the secular social imaginary really works, according to Didem Ünal (2013), is initially by making a choice between two civilizations: the Western and the Muslim. Of course, it is obligatory to underline the historical and political fact that the emphasis was not merely on the Islamic ideology, it was rather every ideology, belief, and identity incompatible with the expected image of the model Turk. Nevertheless, an indisputable truth is, as Ünal elucidates, that thanks to the Kemalist ideology women were liberated from "the religious or cultural constraints of the intimate sphere" (Ibid.). Additionaly, to foster women's equality women were granted the "opportunity to perform as professionals, which was not possible earlier" (Ibid.).

While the above statements appear as positive features in terms of being one of the earliest attempts to emancipate women there pops out a colonial impact of the much praised phenomena (i.e. secularism and modernism). Rural women, veiling women, and, in general, women who were incompatible with the Republican ideal female image did not just encounter neglect, but also stigmatization, exclusion, and "othering" which brings us to the body-politics, namely female sexuality and sexual powers, and the notion of "recognition". With reference to "recognition", Nilüfer Göle writes that the issue "arises when the Other, perceived as different, becomes closer in proximity—spatially, socially, and corporeally. Recognition of difference is possible only when one finds similitude and commonality with the other" (2011: 226). Thereby, she continues, "One has to discern the "concrete other"—single individuals with life histories— in order to be able to tolerate difference as part of a social bond. Overpoliticizing definitions of identity and arguments of conspiracy exclude the possibility of finding semblance and familiarity; indeed they reinforce the demoniacal definitions of the adversary" (Ibid.).

So, the overpoliticizing of identities like being pre-modern, backwards, subaltern, Eastern, or traditional have invented mainly implicit, unconscious, and taken-for-granted hegemony of "White Western Turk" sense among the secular-minded Kemalist elites and, specifically, Kemalist feminists. As Meltem Ahiska puts it, "Turkey reproduces the reified images of the West to justify its regime of power in its boundary management of

dividing spheres, regions, and people along the axis of East and West" (2003: 368). Turkey has never been a colony of Europe; however, the comprehensive and aggressive treatment of the so-called epoch-making cognitive and cultural revolution ended up leading to pure self-orientalism or in other words self-colonialism targeting identities and regions which were culturally and ethnically different spheres. As a result, I have defined Özdamar as a 'blasphemer' who unveils all those subjectivities, regions, spheres and so on contrary to what the Kemalist ideology and its vehicles (i.e. secularism, modernism, westernization) implemented for so long.

5.2. Analyzing the Body-Politics and Geo-Politics of Knowledge by Re-Visiting the Interplay Between Turkish Secularism and the "White Turk" (Feminist) Discourse

Feminist scholar Joan Scott makes a pertinent argument regarding the overshadowing and exclusion of identities labeled non-secular/national and pre-modern, which has severely influenced prominent Turkish feminist paradigms of coalition building across different female subjectivities: "There is neither a self nor a collective identity without an other. There is no inclusiveness without exclusion, no universal without a rejected particular, no neutrality that does not privilege an interested point of view, and power is always at issue in the articulation of these relationships" (2002: 6). Thus, all those divisions, strict exlusions, and inclusions produced controversial gaps between secular-minded feminists and women who do not fit into the big picture of the hegemonic secular social imaginary. The subordination and subalternization of identities, spaces, and geographies brings forth two decolonial concepts: body-politics and geo-politics. Thus, I start with the contours and meaning of body-politics and the geopolitics of knowledge/knowing with respect to the impasse which the prevailing Turkish feminist framework faces in building coalition and solidarity with women from various cultural, social, racial backgrounds who are implicitly or explicitly excluded from the secular social imaginary.

Body-politics and the geo-politics of knowledge are intertwined positionings, "[there] are relations between the geo-historical locations and epistemology, on the one hand, and between identity and epistemology, on the other" (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006: 209). Still today, knowledge and subjectivity are intersectional, and are exclusively framed by the colonial and imperial differences that structure the modern/colonial/patriarchal/capitalist world system. That is, "The modern foundation of

knowledge is territorial and imperial. By modern we mean the socio-historical organization and classification of the world founded on a macro-narrative and on a specific concept and principles of knowledge" (2006: 205). For decolonialist thinkers, "The point of reference of modernity is the European Renaissance founded, as an idea and interpretation of a historical present, on two complementary moves: the colonization of time and the invention of the Middle Ages, and the colonization of space and the invention of America that became integrated into a Christian tripartite geo-political order: Asia, Africa and Europe" (Ibid.). For them the classification of the world emerged from and in Europe. They also argue that, "the Middle Ages were integrated into the history of Europe, while the histories in Asia, Africa and America were denied as history" (Ibid.). Furthermore, "the world map drawn by Gerardus Mercator and Johannes Ortelius worked together with theology to create a zero point of observation and of knowledge: a perspective that denied all other perspectives" (Ibid.).

The real formation of the enunciator, the invisible knowing subject, and enunciated or namely the colonizer and the colonized dichotomy was propagated and universalized with the Western imperial expansion which did not merely mean economic and political expansion but also epistemic. In the making of colonial subjectivities, locations, and communities we realize that "to speak of the geopolitics of knowledge and the geopolitical locations of critical thought is to recognize the persistence of a Western hegemony that positions Eurocentric thought as 'universal', while localizing other forms of thought as at best folkloric" (Walsh 2007: 225). Within this colonial matrix of power gender resides precisely at the crossroad in the production of the predominating logic of dichotomies which re-invents a covert version of patriachy, as Nelson Torres argues: "Racialization works through gender and sex and that the *ego conquiro* is constitutively a phallic ego as well" (2007: 248). Nancy Fraser writes that, "Both gender and 'race' are paradigmatic bivalent collectivities. Although each has peculiarities not shared by the other, both encompass political-economic dimensions and cultural-valuational dimensions" (1997: 19). In this connection, Grosfoguel emphasizes, "Nobody escapes the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the 'modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system'" (2008: 3).

When we glance back at the Turkish historiography about the secularization, modernization, and Turkification process, we realize that the transformation was put into

practice in a way which mimics colonialism. The mimicking of Western secularity cannot be approached as merely civilisational, because in the Turkish case it was to a great extent aiming at cultural, ethnic, religious minorities for assimilation. Nonetheless, its major target was the re-definition of female sexuality and the body, and incompatible subjectivities were to be silenced, stigmatized, obscured, and excluded from the social imaginary. Likewise, Joan Scott argues that, "Secularism has not resolved the difficulties that sexual difference poses for social and political organization; it is rather, one of the frames within those difficulties are addressed and managed" (2009: 2). As she continues:

> [It is frequently assumed that] secularism encourages the free expression of sexuality and that it thereby ends the oppression of women because it removes transcendence as the foundation for social norms and treats people as autonomous individuals, agents capable of crafting their own destiny. In substituting imperfect human initiative for the unquestioned truth of divine will, we are told, secularism broke the hold of traditionalism and ushered in the (democratic) modern age. (Ibid.)

Nevertheless,"it is precisely the gender (and other) discriminations which remain in secular societies that are obscured when secularism and religion are categorically counterposed" (6).

As stated before, Sedef Arat-Koç in her stimulating work, "(Some) Turkish Transnationalism(s) in an Age of Capitalist Globalization and Empire: "White Turk" Discourse, the New Geopolitics, and Implications for Feminist Transnationalism" (2007), argues that the "white Turk" discourse is in collaboration with laicism/secularism and encodes it with symbols of lifestyle (48). She suggests that there exists "an invisible, unselfconscious, unconscious, taken-for-granted hegemony of "white Turk" perspectives among most Turkish intellectuals, including many feminists" (Ibid.). The class backgrounds of Turkish intellectuals and the dominance of the self-orientalizing narrative inherited from Kemalism were never really challenged until the 1960s as they were incontestable. There therefore existed a huge gap between socio-spatial difference and the spatial hierachy was extreme. Nevertheless, with the 1950s Turkey started to see a high rate of rural-urban migration and this phenomenon exposed the just mentioned gap. With reference to Anne McClintock, Leila M. Harris writes:

> In her discussions of 'anachronistic space' and 'atavistic time' Anne McClintock provides conceptual tools to unpack the spatio-temporal logics of colonialism. In its most basic sense, anachronistic space refers to those 'spaces' that appear as fundamentally amodern. Atavistic time refers to the sense that certain people and places occupy a time that is prior, prior to development, prior to modernity – the primitive past. Given my focus here, it is

> notable that McClintock (1995) explicitly theorizes gender and other dimensions of socio-spatial difference as foundational to these concepts. Specifically, McClintock theorizes race and gender as constitutive of what marks and defines particular spaces at anachronistic, and particular populations as atavistic. (1700)

Apparently, gender, ethnicity and spatial difference are intertwined in the making of the "white Turk" which generates "class and other socio-economic inequalities on the basis of class, region, rural/urban divide, all of which have been very significant forces in Turkey" (Arat-Koç 2007: 47). With the emergence of the second Republican era, known as the period between the 1960 and 1980 military coups, Turkey entered a twenty year period of witnessing the upheaval of the Turkish Left, while the period also saw the growth of Islamism. Thus, every form of class struggle was experienced by millions of people, especially the expanding number of working-class members who suffered severe poverty in rural areas and migrated to the urban where there were the most notable uprisings. Nevertheless, the bloody mobilisations were crushed without mercy by the coups arranged by the secular-military establishment. Regarding this, Nilüfer Göle writes, "The military interventions of 1960-1961, 1970-1973, and 1980-1983 can be perceived as state reactions against the 'unhealthy' autonomization and differentiation of economic, political and cultural groups"(quoted in Capezza 2009: 6). Furthermore, it is important to remember that the Turkish military of the time "simply sought the continuance of the Kemalist ideology, which had broad popular support and was the template upon which the constitution allowed various political parties to act" (Ibid.).

The weakening of mass mobilizations, socio-political reactions, and the near complete erasure of the political left led to the absence or even erasure of political discourses to address socio-political and cultural inequalities. In this post-'80s political environment "neoliberalism gained an unquestioned and unchallenged common-sense status" which ended up with rapidly increasing spatial, ethnic, class and social hierarchies in the country (Arat-Koç 2007: 42). Furthermore, Turkey witnessed the rise of Kurdish nationalism as a backlash to Turkification. However, "an increasingly militaristic response by the Turkish state to this nationalism" was enacted which resulted in "a civil war with devastating consequences, especially in Turkey's southeast" (Ibid.). Correspondingly, Islamism in Turkish politics gained more power and visibility as a result of the '80s military junta's opting for religion as an alternative to communism. However, as Arat-Koç states, "With developments internal to Turkey, as well as changes

in geopolitics globally with the end of the Cold War, the whole framework in which "self" and "other" and "friend" and "foe" were defined, changed" (43). So, she argues that while previously "communism was identified in the political mainstream as the number-one threat to Turkish national identity and the state, now "culture" became the basis on which notions of "self" and "other" were defined. Kurds and "Islamists," variously challenging the homogenous conception of modern Turkish identity, were now declared the new enemies" (Ibid.).

The notion of "white Turk" ideology came to light in the early 1990s as a bourgeois class identity that highlights its superiority as its urbanite —in particular Istanbulite— as well as modern and Western features. In brief, as Arat-Koç argues, ""white Turk" ideology combines neoliberalism, pro-"Westernism," and culturalism—specifically, neo-Orientalism—in its approach to Turkish society, Turkish politics, and Turkey's place in the Middle East and the world" (40). Increasing ethnicism and the cultural racism of the "white Turk" discourse also gave way to spatial segregation and hierarchy "in urban spaces between the winners and the losers in the new economy. Some big cities, especially Istanbul, experienced the development of gated communities and middle-class suburban communities as well as gentrification of select neighborhoods" (44). New spaces embodying "whiteness" developed and clearly proved that the "white Turks" possessed an obsession in distancing "themselves from "the Other Turkey" both spatially and ideologically, the new middle classes found themselves in more direct contact with "the West.""(45). Even changing street names associated with the Orient, for instance changing the name of the street from Algeria Street (Cezayir Sokak) to French Street (Fransız Sokağı) (Ibid.). With increasing migration due to increasing poverty in the rural regions and the civil war in south-eastern Turkey the secular social imaginary of the "white Turk" stratum was seen to be literally invaded by the "dark and ignorant masses" (e.g. the peasants, the mustached ones, Easterners) (Ibid.).

All in all, this portrayal of the intersection between gender, ethnic, and spatial hierachies built on the whiteness discourse intertwined with secularism and modernism brings us back to how the geo-politics and body-politics of knowledge operates within the Turkish social imaginary:

> The discourses of whiteness that are implicitly or explicitly present in some of the dominant discourses in Turkish feminisms affect the capacity of these feminisms to reach across

> class, ethnicity, and regional and rural/urban differences, and to represent the different voices and interests of women differently and unequally situated in Turkish society; they also affect the capacity of Turkish feminists to engage in egalitarian, mutual, and inclusive transnational relationships with women's and feminist groups in the Middle East. (Arat-Koç 49)

While prominent "white Turk" feminist perspectives represent the public face of Turkish feminism, the socialist feminist paradigm endeavors to reach a wider diversity of women. Confusingly, Turkish socialist feminist thinking also remains "quiet about the "white Turk" phenomenon and hegemony. Implicitly, socialist feminism may also share the "white Turk" Orientalism with regard to the Middle East" (52).

Taking all these arguments into account, I regard Emine Sevgi Özdamar's authorship, or rather story-teller/gatherer, standpoint as that of a blasphemer. This is inspired by Erdağ Göknar and his groundbreaking book, *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy: The Politics of the Turkish Novel* (2013), which portrays Orhan Pamuk as a novelist who through his literature transgresses the sacredness of the secular modern and contributes to the theme of blasphemy. Like Pamuk, Özdamar's innovative literary narrative depends on her including "mythical and religious forms and contexts against the figures and figurations of the Republican state, its national modernization, its secularization thesis, and its military coups" (32). Furthermore, she dismantles "the binary logic of oppositions such as East and West, tradition and modernity, and religion and secularism," so revising "[the] discourse not only of the secular modern but of Turkish ethno-nationalism and European orientalism" (33). These features define the secular blasphemy of her fiction.

Writing her novels in German through the lense of a diasporic subjectivity, that is, literally translating Turkish expressions, idioms, and folk-tales to German and creating a unique language not quite understandable to the German reader, insinuates the conscious politics beneath her fiction. Furthermore, the portrayal of muslim immigrant women throughout *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* is of these individuals as actively shaping political movements, most importantly contributing to Germany's economy, and being quite intellectual within the Turkish-German community and Germany as a whole (Weber 2010: 38). Nevertheless, the truth is that "highly sexualised images have dominated representations of immigrant women in German popular media. In particular since the late 1980s, the immigrant woman has been understood often in terms of a

repressed sexuality threatened by backward, non-modern, and thus non-European 'cultures'" (39). Therefore, it is not surprising that Özdamar's novels for many years were perceived as just "oriental" and "Turkish" by the German literary canon.

Thus, Emine Sevgi Özdamar occupies a unique position in not just resisting Orientalist tendencies towards migrant women of the Turkish diaspora in Germany within the context of colonial/imperial difference, but also resisting official Turkish historiography and the colonial "white Turk" discourse by re-writing an alternative narrative through various epistemologies, cosmologies, subjectivities, and spheres. With her diasporic subjectivity she travels through the spaces of counter-memory such as folktales and stories told by her grandmother. Although Özdamar has set it otherwise, that she does not have the intention to put any feminist aesthetics or strategic elements in her novels, she seems to anticipate this slowly growing body of scholarship.

Pursuing a decolonial path leads the reader towards a realization and recognition of "the colonial wound" which is connected with the fact that peoples, regions, and certain spheres around the world are hierarchically classified (Mignolo 2009: 161). Özdamar seems to be aware of this "colonial wound" which is framed with dominating narratives that classify identities and silence the 'different'. Therefore, she seems to position herself as a border drifter/dweller and border shifter who aims to heal the wounds of the invisible, silenced, and marginalized, particularly women, by exploring the body- and geo-politics of knowledge and moving towards pluriversality. Thereby, decolonial feminist Maria Lugones' notions of "world traveling" and "loving perception" constitute the core of my analysis which is closely linked to key objectives of (decolonial) feminism such as coalition building, solidarity, recognition, and acceptance.

5.3. *Life is a Caravanserai*: Re-Creating a Palimpsest of the Cultural Memory and Moving Towards Pluri-versality

> Art is often more effective in embodying historically specific ideas than the history- writing on which it may draw. Scientific historical research, however essential it is for its negative virtues of rectifying error and denouncing falsification, has no positive resource to lessen grief, endow calamity with meaning, foster a vision of the world, or legitimate new groups. But art remains in touch with or revives traditionary materials that satisfy our need for community without repressing individualist performance.

Geoffrey Hartman, *Public Memory and Its Discontents*

Emine Sevgi Özdamar's novel *Life is a Caravanserai: Has Two Doors I Came in One I Went out The Other (Das Leben ist eine Karawanserai: hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus)* can be read as an analysis invested in exploring and exposing (de)colonial subjecivities, voices, memories, and spaces mainly on the basis of female sexuality and the body. The title of this literary work is one of longest in twentieth-century German literary history. Besides its significance of being her first novel, it is essential to note once again that with *Life is a Caravanserai* Özdamar won the Ingeborg-Bachman-Prize in 1991 as the first non-native speaker of German. Nonetheless, as mentioned, her achievement was met with significant controvery, much of it revealing the ethnicist and orientalist biases of critics and reviewers of the time. Her re-creation of an alternative narrative, namely a palimpsest, erases and overwrites Turkish and German official historiography from a female perspective. Recently, as Kader Konuk writes, "the reception of Özdamar's work has shifted from a reductionist Orientalist reading that equated the author with the story-teller Scheherazade in the Arabian Nights, to a more politically engaged approach in the late 1990s" (2007: 233). Likewise the current scholarly reception deals "with political as well as aesthetic aspects of her work", and I set forth a literary analysis on the basis of the decolonial feminist paradigm and so a decolonial perspective as a whole.

Thus, the decolonial aspect of her palimpsest-like narrative is mainly read as a semi-autobiographical masterpiece that explores the life of an anonymous Turkish girl whose personal story we follow from her mother's belly to early adulthood. *Life is a Caravanserai* is a literary text with many female voices, especially from Anatolian villages and the suburbs of big cities such as Ankara. On account of this, Azade Seyhan notes, "The narrative is told almost exclusively in women's voices that symbolize the conflicts of historical transitions. In their voices, songs, tales, and litanies, they reinvent cultural traditions whose modernized spirituality can absorb the shocks of modernity" (1996: 421). This is a woman's world, an alternative space of matriarchy: Ayşe, the devout and folktale-telling grandmother, and Fatma, who is the mother nurturing the three siblings amd appears as an admirer and practicer of Atatürk's reforms. Furthermore, various "auntie" figures of the neighbourhood and mad women of those communities

contribute to the female voices. The female characters are distinctively powerful. On the other hand, men are delineated either as naive or relentless, such as the grandfather.

While *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* will be read on the basis of transnational migration to Germany, this novel is for the most part grounded on internal migration due to poverty in Turkey through which we start our journey from Istanbul to Bursa, on to Ankara, and back to Istanbul. The 1950s and early 1960s mark the period of mass migration from rural Anatolian regions to the major urban centres of western Turkey. Political struggles, the increasing influence of American imperialism, growing urbanisation, and the first wave of workers to Germany all take place through these crucial years. The Anatolian grandparents, particularly grandma Ayşe, step to the fore as the transmitters of cultural memory through story-telling, proverbs, and prayers that were obscured and burdened due to the implementation of modernity and Turkism which campaigned against religious, traditional, and non-Turkish/Western elements. We metaphorically travel through all these worlds of women and witness the delinking of the author from dominant narratives towards a recognition of the "colonial wound" and reaching the decolonial imaginary. But most importantly, Özdamar as the border-drifter and shifter uncovers the body-politics and geo-politics of knowledge from a decolonial standpoint. That is, her literal and symbolic traveling through spheres from rural Anatolia and dusty and muddy peripheries overshadowed by the spatial hierarchy imposed by an early version of the "white Turk" discourse transpires through grandmother Ayşe's tales, customs, spiritual powers, prayers, and symbols related to the so-called pre-modern Ottoman era. A movement towards pluriversality takes place which Mignolo depicts as the entanglement of several cosmologies connected in a power differential, instead of cultural relativism ("*On Pluriversality*" 2013). For him, this "power differential is the logic of coloniality covered up by the rhetorical narrative of modernity" as "Modernity is a fiction that carries in it the seed of Western pretense to universality" (Ibid.).

The pluriverse coincides with Lugones' notion of "World Traveling", that is, the existence of many worlds on an equal terrain. Özdamar's novel exclusively bears this feature of traveling which is instantly evident with the title *Life is a Caravanserai: Has Two Doors I Came in One I Went out The Other*. David Jennings Gramling interprets this lengthy title as follows:

> The title itself takes up too much space and time, and most scholarship does not get past the fifth word when mentioning it. At first glance, the title seems to be a clear and concrete spatial story, consisting of 18 (out of 19) basic German words. But Caravanserai? Specific to Persian and Turkish transit cultures since the mid-16th century, it is likely that this one word, out of 19, spoils the transparency of the title for the vast majority of German (and English) readers. And yet, the title itself is an act of translation, a declaration of metaphor, inviting andurging inquiry and vicarious experience. (2008: 144)

The two door construction, that is to say the caravanserai, historically was a roadside inn where travelers could rest and benefit from various services like staying, eating, and bathing for free. Thus, a caravanserai is a place where one recovers, and as for Özdamar it is symbolically the third space, a decolonial imaginary where she performs a counter literary-historical narrative. Moreover, Özdamar's non-sedentary dwelling between spaces and between doors also stands for her free egress and continueing travels between past/present, genders, sanity/insanity, death/life, and, indeed, languages (i.e. Arabic, Turkish and German).

5.3.1. Exploring the Female Figures in the Novel

a) Grandma Ayşe: A Threshold to a Mystical World and a Border Dweller

To start with the female figures of the novel, the narrator's grandma Ayşe is the major female character who constantly utters Arabic words through her prayers, exhibits traditional beliefs, and tells proverbs and stories dating back to the Ottoman era and even older Islamic tales. Thus, grandma is the prominent character who symbolizes tradition, religion, and spiritualism. She possesses the role of being a mediator between the past and present, namely, the (pre)-Ottoman era and the secularized and modernized Turkey. While Turkish socio-political history is built on a perception of decoupling from the traditional, religious, and pre-modern past, Özdamar's narrator connects herself and the reader to the Oriental past:

> Looking into my eyes and speaking her Cappadocian village dialect, Grandmother spoke Arabic words that followed each other like a caravan of camels. The caravan of camels collected in my mouth, I spoke the prayers with Grandmother, and so we had two caravans of camels, her camels which were larger than mine took mine, placed them in front, and taught my camels to walk. Sitting there, we swayed like camels too, and I said, "Bismillahirahmanirrahim". (37)[10]

[10] Groβmutter sprach diese arabischen Wörter, die wie eine Kamelkarawane hintereinander liefen, in meine Augen guckend, in ihrem Kapadokia-Dorfdialekt Die Kamelkarawane sammelte sich in meinem Mund, ich sprach die Gebete mit Groβmutter so hatten wir zwei Kamelkarawanen, ihre Kamele, die groβer waren als

From this passage we see that there is an intimate relationship between the grand-daughter and the grandma. Grandma Ayşe transmits her religious knowledge, her prayers, to the narrator who tries to memorize the first Surah within the Quran.

The caravan of camels collecting in her mouth might at first sight seem to infer to the orientalist perception of the narrator; however, it is rather that the narrator joins the caravan and cherishes the route led by grandma. As Soheila Ghaussy writes:

> The narrator's imitation of her grandmother's prayers is represented by the specifically physical imagery of the caravan camels. Yet, this image is not turned into mere metaphor; instead, it retains its corporealist—camels remain camels—which dislodges the meaning of the narrator's utterance while preserving the sounds and body of the words. (2001: 144)

It can be inferred, then, that the caravan image also refers to the literal nomadic wandering taking place in Turkey's history of caravan travel which recalls the title of the novel, but it also envisions the moving of the protagonist's family between the peripheries of the country and the urban. Furthermore, it is apparent that grandma is positioned as the enunciator of knowledge from other cosmologies. As the protagonist emphasizes, it is grandma's camels that place the narrator's small camels at the front in order to teach them to walk, namely her.

That grandma Ayşe's camels stay behind can be associated with her being old in terms of age and so belonging to the past in time. The past and present are therefore linked to each other, quite contrary to the Turkish socio-political historiography which glorifies the enforced traumatic break from the allegedly pre-modern and oriental Ottoman empire. Thus, Özdamar makes an implicit critical allusion to the cultural revolution enacted by Atatürk and the reformist cadre who purportedly trimmed the Ottoman language of Arabic and Persian to make modern Turkish. And, most traumatically, for the sake of the modernization and westernization project the Kemalist reformists banned the Arabic script by imposing the Latin alphabet:

> My mother could not read or write Arabic script herself. When she was going to school, Turkey was a republic and Arabic script was forbidden. Before that, people used to speak Turkish and write in Arabic letters. In 1927 the Republicans reformed the writing system and instead of Arabic letters, Latin letters became the Turkish alphabet. I only knew Latin letters of the alphabet but my grandfather could not write with Latin letters. He knew to write in Arabic. If my grandmother had learnt to read and write, she would only have known

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meine, nahmen meine vor ihre Beine und brachten meinen Kamelen das Laufen bei. Beim Sitzen wackelten wir auch wie Kamele, und ich sprach: "Bismilldhirahmanirrahim".

> Arabic too. I thought if grandfather Ahmet and grandmother Ayşe were deaf and dumb and could only talk to us in writing, I would never have known either of them. (49)

Here the child-protagonist's naive questioning insinuates a contestation of the abrupt and thus traumatic Kemalist reforms at the time. As Yasemin Yıldız notes, Özdamar reworks the Turkish trauma which resulted from state violence aimed at de-orientalizing a society through the colonial/modern power relations. In *Mother Tongue* (1994) her criticism is much more explicit, "I screamed out poems on the anniversaries of Atatürk's death and wept, but he should not have forbidden the Arabic writing. This ban, it's as though half of my head had been cut off" (33-4).

"Bismillahirahmanirrahim", which grandma teaches her, is a significant verse from the Quran which means, as the narrator later finds out, "in the name of God, or in the name of Allah who protects and forgives" (40). In fact, many characters in the novel do not know the literal meaning of the verse; however, its use "is depicted in the novel as so ingrained in everyday Islamic life that it becomes habitual not merely as a prelude to prayer, but often also as a general expression that precedes profane actions like cooking, eating, washing, getting dressed, et cetera" (Ghaussy 1999: 10). As Ghaussy writes, "Rather than taking the expression literally, the novel's characters often use it superstitiously, as a charm or spell with the alleged power to ward off evil" (Ibid.). Ghaussy also argues that the transcribing of the Arabic prayers into Turkish phonetics demonstrates the "heterogeneous acculturation process bound to a broader tradition within Islamic cultures". As Ghaussy continues:

> In re-creating the ritualized ways in which the Arabic prayers are learned, repeated, and transcribed into Turkish phonetics, the process of learning to pray is additionally seen as imitative and unreflected, similar to the child-like learning of how to walk. Consequently, Islamic religious belief is represented as a process of a highly individualized education and socialization rather than as part of a religious indoctrination process-which is the view most commonly held within the German rhetoric surrounding Islam. (Ibid.)

While this is true, another historical fact is not uncovered by her interpretation which is the Turkification process that Turkish society underwent. The change of the alphabet was followed by many other reforms like the translation of the Quran into Turkish and the Ezan, the call for prayer, being conducted in Turkish until 1950. As Welat Zeydanlıoğlu notes, the delinking process from the alleged Oriental past and the building of a nation-state demanded the elimination of every symbol associated with an anti-modern past (2008).

Soheila Ghaussy's analysis of the Quranic verses being used superstitiously without knowing the literal meaning demonstrates merely one part of the truth. That the prayers are recited with Turkish phonology is interpreted by Ghaussy as a challenge to "the patriarchal supremacy of the Quran's rhetoric and infuses it with orality, traditionally associated with a "feminine" practice" (1999: 10). In fact, the "Turkish phonology" infers another version of patriarchy grounded in nationalistic Turkification, and other elements contributing to the coloniality/modernity phenomenon. As Zeydanlıoğlu states, "Since Western modernity, superiority and strength was defined by homogenous nation-statehood and militarism, systematic Turkification became Kemalism's very own civilising mission" (2008: 6). Noticeably, though some scholars identify Özdamar as Turkish, she is originally Kurdish, and we learn from the protagonist in the novel that her teacher in Istanbul despises her Anatolian, basically Kurdish background (23). This reinforces my perspective that suspiciously approaches the association between the employing of "Turkish phonology" and dismantling the patriarchal rhetoric and imagery. Instead, I interpret Özdamar's references to religious and traditional symbols as a decolonial feminist intervention into the indisputable dominance of the intrinsically patriarchal and colonial Kemalist ideology and other discursive offsprings based on it.

In this sense, the novel frequently alludes to "the American-backed Demokrat Partisi (the Democratic Party), the first party to come to power through popular vote in 1950 after the introduction of the multiparty system in 1946" (Seyhan 1996: 422). Interestingly, Adnan Menderes, prime minister of Turkey and co-founder of so-called American-backed Democrat Party, emerges as a leader who legalized the Arabic version of the Ezan, the call to prayer, and re-opened thousands of mosques as well that were closed down long ago. Related to this, the famous Turkish historian Mustafa Armağan in an op-ed column cites memories of people who after almost two decades of prohibitions and suppression in 1950 were allowed to cherish the Arabic Ezan. He writes that thousands of people poured into the streets crying, and begging the imam to repeat the recitation (2010). Through Özdamar's narrative, especially parts in which she cites her mother, we learn that the mother comes forward as "a proud heiress of Atatürk's reforms. Her fierce loyalty to Atatürk's political party, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (The People's Republican Party), turns her into a formidable critic of the American-backed Demokrat Partisi (the Democratic Party)" (Seyhan 1996: 422). Accordingly, Seyhan writes:

> The complicity of this party in delivering Türkiye into the hands of American capitalism and imperialism in the fifties, its exploitation of the most archaic remnants of Islam for popular votes, the rigging of elections, the corruption of party officials, buying district votes in bulk-in short, the troubled history of Türkiye's first and most telling experiment with democracy-is told in the silently resistant voice of the mother through the words of the innocent child narrator. (Ibid.)

In *Turkey: A Modern History* (2004), Erik Jan Zürcher argues that the 1950s, the period in which the novel is set, saw the severe decline of Atatürk's political party. For the first time in Turkish history politicians started to consider a serious modernization project not through a cognitive revolution but one based on a move towards a liberal free-market economy, which is exactly what the Kemalists were rightly criticizing (224). However, increasing poverty and spatial segregation/hierarchy between regions and communities made the Democratic Party the only choice in opposition to the republican state-elites (i.e. state bureaucrats, army officers, and urban proffessionals) who perceived the Anatolian peoples as uncivilized, backwards, and anti-modern. Within this context, a remarkable workshop organized by Sabancı University entitled "Gender, Ethnicity, and the Nation-State: Anatolia and Its Neighboring Regions in the Twentieth Century" (2009), included a paper about the "peasantist discourse" of the Kemalist elites. This was Metin Yüksel's research with the title, "Training Kurdish Men and Women in Turkey: Mobile Village Courses for Men and Women in the 'Eastern Provinces". He touches upon the mobile schools, preachers, and even gendermarie who were assigned the task of regulating the bodies of Anatolians by passing over physical borders as a manifestation of body-politics and geo-politics of knowledge:

> As Asım Karaömerlioğlu demonstrates, peasantist discourse and practices were one of the crucial characteristics of the Kemalist elites during the early decades of the Turkish Republic (2006). "Men and women" refers to the gendered character of the state's approach to the rural countryside which was embodied in the fact that tailoring courses were organized for women, while men were trained in ironworking and carpentry courses. Finally, "eastern provinces" refers to one of the ways in which the state perceived the predominantly Kurdish provinces in the guise of an issue of regional backwardness, rather than recognizing Kurdishness of the issue (Yeğen 2006). (61)

Therefore, it is not surprising that the child-protagonist in *Life is a Caravanserai,* who possesses a purely observer standpoint, will show up as a socialist young woman fighting such discriminatory, racist, and colonialist politics by traveling to the south-east of Turkey in Özdamar's second novel *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (2007). She will not give way to both the American-backed party and also Atatürk's party enmeshed with hegemonic and colonizing narratives. The protagonist in both of her novels will narrate

the traumatic outcomes of two coups in 1960 and 1971 backed up by Atatürk's party. In the former Turkey's prime minister, who legalized the Arabic Ezan mentioned above, was hanged along with two other cabinet members. The latter ended up with the hanging of three leftist students named Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin Alan, and Yusuf Aslan.

Noticeably, both of Özdamar's novels touch upon the military coups conducted by the Kemalist army officers against the so-called two enemies of the republican ideology: Islamists and Communists. As I mentioned earlier citing Sedef Arat-Koç, with the increasing economic crisis, unrest within the working class, and the ongoing Cold War at the time, Turkish national identity and the state defined the "communist" as the "other" of the nation. However, in time Kurds and Islamists were seen as "challenging the homogenous conception of modern Turkish identity" (2007: 43). Leslie Adelson in *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* (2005), with reference to Özdamar's close relationship with the Arabic language that becomes totally visible in her book *Mutter Zunge* (1990), emphasizes the following:

> Arabic is conjured, mostly by means of German words, as an eroticized language of Islamic mysticism. Because "Grandfather Tongue" weaves a tale of the Cold War as a lived phenomenon, we would do well to remember that Marxism too, meant to reveal the mystification of social relations under capitalism, entails a language of mysticism in a different key. (156-7)

Both Islam and Communism for Özdamar become "the two mirror opposites of capitalism and social taboos in modern Turkey" (Ergin 2009: 104). Thereby, the Arabic-Islamic culture and mystical traditional beliefs and folk-tales that grandmother exhibits and transmits appear to be a contrast to the German and to some extent the Turkish languages and cultures which become the symbol of Western capitalism (Ibid.). Throughout the novel the protagonist and her brother ask their grandmother to tell "The giant's mother" tale which is about a mythical flying creature, Simurgh, that is mainly known to have made its famous appearance in Persian mythological tales. Simurgh is generally equated with Zümrüdü Anka in Turkish literature, a name derived from the Arabic Anqā. Furthermore, this mythical bird frequently appears in Sufi poetry and Kurdish folklore. Özdamar's protagonist transmits the tale as follows:

> While she was telling it, I would go backwards in the tale, back to the door, the door opened up, the young man came in, the door stayed open, there was a woman sitting there with lots of flesh on her belly and her legs and before she could speak the man grabbed her

> breast, put it in his mouth and sucked. The woman said, "Human child, human child, I would have eaten you up, but you have drunk milk from my breast". (140)

Through the tale the little girl metaphorically travels within different imaginary terrains and comes across doors which allude to the title of the novel. Grandmother's tales have provided her with the experience to discover other worlds. It turns out to be more than some sort of discovery, since the little girl initially re-imagines the tale and unconsciously re-writes the tale herself. And, appararently, the little girl will grow up and re-tell the stories to an international audience through her novels. Hereby I argue that with these tales Özdamar has found her own voice, a voice that is transferred to *écriture*. Strikingly, the famous Persian Sufi poet Ferid ud-Din Attar in his magnum opus *Mantiqu't-Tayr* (1177) meaning *Speech of the Birds* writes about a group of birds that decide to search for the legendary Simurgh. The underlying message of this search is to find yourself and reach the ultimate divine level. Hardship and purification through this journey are essential elements which coincidentally apply to Özdamar's finding herself within the German literary canon as a non-native German speaker and continue writing until she is accepted not just as a Scheherazade from Turkey.

Thus, grandma becomes the protagonist's amulet through her teachings, she is symbolically the threshold to a mystical world leading the young girl through an epistemic shift. The protagonist becomes a border drifter who does not perceive other epistemologies and subjectivities with an arrogant perception. It is a perception that Lugones defines with reference to the feminist theorist and philospher Marilyn Frye who argues for the importance of love between kinswomen (i.e. mothers and daughters) and love across racial and cultural boundaries without perceiving them arrogantly (1987: 5). In relation to Lugones' decolonial approach, I draw attention to Soheila Ghaussy's highly fitting observation on the relationship of the protagonist with the grandmother associated with the Arabic prayers that, "The narrator's unintellectualized repetition of her grandmother's Arabic prayers becomes an almost intuitive process which stands for the intimate relationship between grandmother and granddaughter instead of the narrator's acceptance of a sacred doctrine as part of her religious identity" (1999: 11). The verse Bismillahirrahmanirrahim "becomes a code of communication between the characters of the novel" (Ibid.). And lastly, when the young protagonist falls seriously ill, we instantly witness grandma beside her reciting Arabic prayers:

> The Arabic prayers came out of her mouth, I saw all these words as birds trapped between the cement walls, saw their heads hit the walls, saw them fly back and forth. I repeated her prayers, there were more and more birds, they were flying above men, in front of me, behind me, in front of my feet. Grandmother gave me her right hand to bite into. I bit her hand, the birds went away, I pulled my teeth back out of her hand, the birds came back. (84)

Grandma does not merely show up as a mediator between the past and present, that is the Ottoman era and the Republican, she is also a border dweller who stands between life and death. One day grandmother takes her to the graveyard where the old woman starts to pray to the dead laying there:

> As the letter from the mouth of my grandmother turned into a lovely voice and a lovely image in the graveyard sky, my grandmother blew them to the left and the right with her breath. "The dead need this". I saw the letters, some of them looked like birds, some like hearts with arrows in them, some like caravans, some like sleeping animals, some like a river, some like trees dashed apart by the wind, some like running snakes, some like trees shivering in the rain and the wind. "Grandmother, where is death?" my grandmother said, "Death is between the eyes and the eyebrows, is that faraway?" Then she ran from one death to the other, breathed out more letters, images, that now looked like images of light in the sunlight, and she held open her hands in front of her breasts as though she were carrying two small watermelons. I held my hands like hers, carrying in them the shadows of the graveyard trees and the passing birds from one dead person to the next. (8)

The protagonist later inherits this feature of her grandmother, and starts to say the Arabic prayers name by name for the souls of the dead, "That way the prayers could find their dead" (105). After a while, grandmother begins to give her new dead people every day, in turn the little girl will give "her the nails and bits of iron" she has collected which grandmother will then give to the mother (112). Her mother would give these pieces of iron and nails to a man who often comes to their street with his donkey, and will exchange the bits with clothespins which she would use to attach her baby-daughter's diapers. Here we see how the women act in solidarity with each other. Grandmother as a leading figure implicitly teaches her granddaughter to link with dead people and as a result gain consciousness about the fact that life is not eternal, and there is no everlasting possession of things we have:

> No one will be able to keep this world; here, look, at my teeth, they've eaten and chewed all kinds of things in my life, look, they have not turned to gold or silver. If you see a blind person, go over to him, stand near him, close one eye, that way you will feel close. If you meet someone in the street who cannot speak, pick a stone and put it on your tongue." And so I sat across from my grandmother, over my two knees, one eye closed, a stone on my tongue, untangling knots from threads of wool, wool dust in my nose, and learning the prayers for the people who had died that I would chant at the graveyard and in bed at night. (37)

That the grandmother tells her to mimic a blind person to understand the hardship she/he encounters also hints at her future profession as a (stage) actress whose bodily performance will be an embodiment of the protagonist's socialist vision. As a result, grandmother mainly comes to the fore as a representative of a counter-subjectivity whose mediating role through the novel dismantles the power relations framed by the colonial and imperial differences which have structured the modern/colonial/patriarchal/capitalist world system.

b) Fatma: The Proud Heiress of Kemalist Discourse and Mother to the Protagonist

The mother of the protagonist comes to the fore as a supportive wife, a tale-teller like grandmother, a proud heiress of Kemalist reforms, and completely loyal to Atatürk's political party of the time. In fact, we instantly learn that Fatma, the mother, is burdened with a tragic past of her own mother who was tortured to death by her merciless father, a rich landlord at the time with several wives. Though Azade Seyhan presupposes that Fatma perceives her father as a relentless patriarch, it seems that her stance is rather ambivalent in that sense (1996: 422). As the protagonist reveals:

> For my father and grandmother, my grandfather was a merciless bandit. Mother said, "He was merciful too, he married a young Armenian woman to save her from massacre. My father saw her on the bridge, she was about to throw herself in the water. Because my Armenian mother's fear made her believe the earth was made by fire, she never came out into the garden, she always stayed in the house, in dark corners. Believe me, my father washed her feet with cold water to take the fire away". (239)

Indeed it is not actually the case that the the mother underestimates her father's relentlessly patriarchal character, as throughout the narration we see that a fathomless sorrow takes over her mother when her mother's fate is recalled (51). Still, it is ambivalent why the major figure coming forward as the inheritor of Kemalist ideology does not take a problematizing stance against her father's once oppressive attitude towards her mother. In fact, when the grandfather visits the family, we witness quite openly that he reflects his deeply patriarchal and oppressive tendencies by telling stories grounded in orthodox Islamic interpretations associated with women's and men's status. Within the realm of his patriarchal imagery women should not take hard steps not to make men lustful and men were supposed to teach women to obey them (241). During his stay he sometimes would take a fruit out of the protagonist's hand and eat it up and say, "Being a girl, means being patient" (Ibid.). We only hear grandmother's irritation through a quiet voice saying,

"Merciless Ahmet Aga" (Ibid.). The "quiet voice" of grandmother might in fact coincide with Fatma's non-reactive posture towards grandfather's patriarchal positioning. Basically, she is aware of the the patriarchal logic and imagery surrounding and threatening her daughter and gives her books to read. Probably, her choice of manifestation rather crops up in silence and indirectly.

Still it is the mother who transmits the patriarchal and even self-colonizing logic of the Kemalist discourse which I will touch upon in detail later. Compared to the mother, grandmother is much more daring and open in the novel in warning the protagonist about the foreseen obstacles women face if they do not educate themselves. Thus, her grandmother would say, "Sister, read your books so you will not end up washing a man's feet. Here I will clean up instead, sister" (164). Remarkably, grandmother calls her little granddaughter "sister" which shows how both women have formed a coalition, a sisterhood, in resisting against hegemonic narratives. The mother, on the other hand, has a complicated relationship with the reproduction of dominant socio-political and cultural structures. Rather, she seems reluctant to exhibit overt resistance by contrast with the grandmother.

With reference to the mother's obscure standpoint again, the protagonist's father would interestingly claim the following: "My daughter, your mother is in love with her merciless father, we cannot do anything, we are barefoot peasants for her. Her father is an Aga" (239). The father's reasoning about his wife's non-problematizing posture against grandfather seems to bring out the class differences between the couple. With reference to Anibal Quijano's notion of the "coloniality of power", Maria Lugones coins the phrase the "coloniality of gender" by complicating Quijano's perspective. In *Toward a Decolonial Feminism* (2010) she states that "unlike colonization, the coloniality of gender is still with us; it is what lies at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world system of power" (746). Furthermore, she argues that "the semantic consequence of the coloniality of gender is that 'colonized woman' is an empty category: no women are colonized; no females are women" (745). Indeed, within this patriarchal/capitalist imagery both the female and male are empty categories. Thus, Mustafa, the protagonist's father, is defined by her mother as a child-like man who is unable to hold on to his profession as a builder and as a result dragged his family from the urban to various peripheries of the country (183). It appears, then, that class

differences between Mustafa and Ahmet Aga identify the latter more with masculinity and the former with femininity.

For Özdamar gender and sexuality are never static categories. By portraying ambivalent male and female figures in association with the expected stereotypical masculinity/femininity in the patriarchal imagery, she escapes power relations and constructs a third space, namely the decolonial imagery. According to Ghaussy, Özdamar's texts parody and perform the 'feminine' and hereby the 'masculine': "In some instances, for example, "femininity" is not represented as being tied to the female body; rather, it is staged as a performance of stereotypically gendered roles through which the characters acquire shifting sexual identities" (1999: 8). Indeed, that sexual identities have a high tendency to shift is beyond dispute. As Maldonado-Torres puts it: "Race and caste, along with gender and sexuality, are perhaps the four forms of human differentiation that have served most frequently as means to transgress the primacy of the self-Other relation and to obliterate the traces of the trans-ontological in the concrete world" (2007: 259). That is, identity is a slippery terrain that can overlap with many other clashing attributes.

> Throughout the novel one frequently encounters patriarchal rhetoric uttered by women, especially by the protagonist's mother Fatma:
>
> "If you let a girl's heart go free, she will marry a drummer or a clarinet player"
>
> "When a girl is born, all hell breaks loose"
>
> "You cannot sell girls in the bazaar, girls are long on hair and short on brains". (168)

Özdamar employs a clever way of depicting the patriarchal logic and rhetoric. These idioms initially give the impression that these women have passively absorbed this hegemonic language. Nevertheless, these sayings, which are highlighted with quotations marks, are set forth to indicate their being cited rather than being invented by the women. In truth, "femininity" is unmasked as a specifically patriarchal concept through Özdamar's employment of cliche-ridden notions about women and their identity. In a particularly illustrative example in the novel, "femininity" is overtly parodied through commonplace expressions which the women themselves use, and then laugh about (Ghaussy 1999: 8).

While Fatma, noticeably, would come forward as a woman who endeavors to become the representative of a Kemalist discourse and cutting ties with the pre-Republican period, grandfather and grandmother emerge as voices of a gradually vanishing past. Besides, as mentioned earlier, grandmother in particular stands for a

counter-memory of the Turkish socio-political historiography which aimed to break from the so-called backwards, anti-modern, and Oriental past. As Yasemin Yıldız writes:

> Both the grandmother in Karawanserei and other illiterate or rural mothers in Özdamar's book (such as the protesting mothers in "Mutter Zunge" and in Brücke) try to resist state power, while the narrators' own mothers often try to fit in. This generational alignment has a particular political connotation. The urban mother belongs to the first generation to have grown up in the Republic and to share Kemalist dreams and values such as secularism and modernization. the grandmother, on the other hand, represents traditional folk wisdom. She is not aligned with the Ottoman Empire or any state, however, but with strands of anarchic Anatolian popular culture. The daughter, as the youngest generation, time and again allies herself with the spirit of folk resistance embodied by the grandmother. (2012: 153)

Apparently, the mother possesses the potential to reproduce and transmit authoritarian and subalternizing political, social, cultural, and linguistic structures as a heiress of the Kemalist discourse. The dichotomy between the very few urban cities and Anatolia, the so-called backwards and pre-modern peripheries, are obviously perceived through the eyes of the coloniality/modernity paradigm. Özdamar portrays how the aforementioned modernity/coloniality has brought about power relations between the so-called secularized and modernized urbanites and the Anatolian, Eastern, and other communities:

> I started school. The teacher asked everyone for their name and where they were born. I said, "I was born in Anatolia, in Malatya," The teacher said, "Then you are a Kurd, you have a tail growing on your ass." She laughed, all the other laughed too, and called me "Kurd with a tail". (23)

From then on the narrator starts to sit at the back of the class, but she does not succumb to silence. She starts to tell a religious story her grandmother told her to the girl sitting next to her. Grandmother's stories nourish her visibility, while the teacher's racist reaction is to exclude her from the class. In this sense, the mother can also be taken as a prototype figure with regard to this incident that puts forward how the body-politics and geo-politics of knowledge has been working. Thereupon, when the protagonist returns from her holiday in Anatolia spent with her grandfather, her mother's reaction is striking:

> "Mother, I am back." My mother stood facing me, but I could not put my arms around her. Between us stood a wall made of the strange dialect I had brought back under my tongue from the Anatolian city. My mother said, "Do not talk like that you have to speak Istanbul Turkish, clean Turkish. If you use that Anatolian dialect they'll call you peasant, understand?" I opened my arms again, said, "Mother-Anacuğum." My mother said, "Say Anneciğim," with this wall of dialect between us, we sat down on the floor… The two words were locked in battle in the middle of the room while spiders very calmly drew out their houses the lenght of the walls. My grandmother came saw the sparring between "Anacuğum" and "Anneciğim", said "Istanbul words do not leave a sweet taste on the tongue, the words are like diseased branches, they break one after the other.' My mother

> said," Cannot you hear the way she says Anacuğum?", Grandmother said, "Yes, she's saying Anagı,"which in her Kapadokia village dialect also meant mother. Her Anağı and my Anacuğum stood side by side across from the Istanbul Anneciğim. (36)

When the mother realizes that she will not give up on her "Anacuğum", she starts to charge her for every "Anacuğum", "For the words I brought back from the city where my mother and I were born. That is how Istanbul knives quickly trimmed my Anacuğum down to Anneciğim" (Ibid.).

A few pages on from this incident we witness that the family has moved to a district that she calls the "religious street" where there is no electricity. Here Özdamar's protagonist observes another similar obvious opposition between the grandmother and the mother. Thereby the little girl realizes that when officers, teachers, or other governmental officials visited their house, her mother would despise grandmother for being a peasant. But when these people leave, she would be nice again (48). While for the mother these professionals were to be respected, grandmother considers them people "who thought they were better than the hole through which they had come into the world, just because they had learnt to write and read" (47). In fact, when Atatürk was establishing the Republic of Turkey, all these teachers, lawyers, and so all professionals were assigned the role of implementing Kemalist ideology. This ended up with the elite community's subalternizing of the subjecivities incompatible with the expected image of the ideal Turk. Thus inventing the colonial subjectivity, that is to say "the Other" who is the non-modernized/secular/Westernized and mainly non-Turk subject of the Turkish Republic. Such categorization and essentialization primarily included the Anatolian, Islamist, Alewi, and Kurdish peoples residing at the peripheries of the country. Apparently, this resulted in self-colonization which can be witnessed openly by looking at the incident in which the teacher looks down on the Anatolian protagonist. Thus, as the anarchist Anatolian woman, each time when these professionals visit the family, grandmother would refuse to wear clean clothes, and stay in her room.

This dichotomous logic dramatically influences the protagonist, and will later figure in the stark differences between cities like Istanbul and the rest:

> The city was another planet. It was much closer to the sun than Istanbul. In a few days I was a black girl. I moved about beneath the white sun with all the other people who had turned black. Later, when I saw the negatives of photographs, I was reminded of this time, of white sun and the black people. So that was why the teacher in Istanbul asked whether I had a tail growing on my ass, because I was born in this city. The people in Istanbul were

> the developed photographs you like to hang on the wall, and the people in Anatolia were the negatives you leave lying somewhere in the dust and forget. (32)

What the little girl figures out at such a young age is the implicitly imposed gap between the so-called black people and the urbanites (i.e. Istanbulites) of the time. Özdamar's narrative indeed seems to foresee the mass migration to cities like Istanbul and these people being labeled as the "kara kalabalıklar" (dark crowds) by the White Turks. That the teacher teased her by asking if she grows a tail on her ass obviously exhibits how orientalization and subalternization can arise in the educational milieu, no matter that the conversation occurs between a teacher and student. The teacher figure demands a close look, as Mustafa Kemal, the founder of Republican Turkey, still today is frequently referred to as the head teacher of the nation. As Erik J. Zürcher states, "He was presented as the father of the nation, its saviour and its teacher" (2004: 182). Additionally, Esra Özyürek writes:

> Atatürk paid utmost attention to training a new generation of teachers who would both be ideal citizens themselves and teach other generations how to become the same […] Women educators were simultaneously the most prevalent objects and subjects of the Republican reforms. In their bodies, women teachers united what Homi Bhabha (1990: 292) defines as a split between "the constinuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" in nationlist narrative. (2006: 34)

Coincidentally, the teasing teacher is a female, probably trained at institutions established right after the advent of the nation-state.

As I mentioned earlier, Metin Yüksel in his paper entitled "Training Kurdish Men and Women in Turkey: Mobile Village Courses for Men and Women in the 'Eastern Provinces'" (2009) elaborates on how the "eastern provinces" were perceived by the Republican elites, and thereby teachers of the time, as "predominantly Kurdish provinces in the guise of an issue of regional backwardness, rather than recognizing Kurdishness as the issue" (61). These officers, teachers and bureaucrats, all saw themselves as the soldiers fighting against the ignorance of these masses, but then with a self-orientalizing perception. Towards the end of the novel, Özdamar gives voice to this hegemonic Kemalist ideology which sometimes was even defined as the "Turkish religion" (Zürcher 2004: 182). Thus, after the military coup takes place, the family of the protagonist goes on a picnic. A young officer cadet joins them; however, the young man does not even seem to have the slightest idea of sitting with the families around him. While he is just standing there in his military uniform, he suddenly utters sentences totally revealing the

Turkish military's presumptions which also somewhat reflects the perspective of the other professional elites:

> "My people is illiterate. The politicians can betray it" Then he said, "Atatürk ideas" I looked at the faces of the tomatoes and cucumbers and onions I had to peel and half heard what he was saying. He talked about hot water, and said the military schools would not admit men who had lots of hair on their bodies, or were colour blind, or were too short, or had crooked faces. He also said, "All the men in this country are made from the same clay. But the military boys are better quality jugs, the civilians are poorer quality, they are crooked." Then he said things like, "Faithful to your homeland"… When you are in the uniform you do not shout, you do not go to a brotherl, Atatürk is within you". (216)

While the young officer is copying all these imposed ideas, the little girl does not bother herself with concentrating on them. The political, social, and linguistic trauma due to the reformist ideology gradually becomes more and more unbearable. This turns up as completely visible when the protagonist and her family visit Atatürk's mausoleum. Her trauma reaches an extreme level after visiting the marble room built for Atatürk, "We stood there motionless by the marble, I started counting how many wrinkles my mother and grandmother had in their dresses. Grandfather's suit had a lot of shiny spots from too much" (244). She labels this place the "merciless column mausoleum", which turned them into older and poorer figures. The impact of the trauma will become unbearable, she will collapse into self-questioning, "I wanted to hear again what my name was. Who am I? How old am I?" (245). On this, Yasemin Yıldız with reference to Cathy Caruth, a prominent theorist in the field of trauma, writes, "trauma is also tied to survival in multiple ways" (2012: 163). Here the survival comes forward by the re-writing of a counter-memory.

5.4. Concluding Remark on *Life is a Caravanserai*

In conclusion, by employing specific signifying systems like stories told through a symbolic language, Özdamar "narrates a magical history, casts a spell intended to heal the pain inflicted by upheavals of modern times and to ease the burden of cultural loss. The narrative comes into being as a variegated text that charts a course between official knowledge and history and various manifestations and enactments of the occult" (Seyhan 1996: 420). To get over the "individual and collective mental imbalance", namely the colonial wound, Özdamar pursues the unfolding of the body-politics and geo-politics of knowledge (Ibid.). Her narration distinctively manifests a political dimension through parodies based on the performance of "femininity" and "masculinity" that ends up with

the dislodging of the authoritarian, orientalizing, and colonizing narratives. Thereby, she positions herself as a border drifter/dweller and border shifter who aims to heal these wounds of the invisible, silenced, and marginalized, and in particular female, colonial subjectivities. These are subjectivities which have been undermined through the Kemalist discourse and later on by the White Turk ideology that have deeply influenced and paralysed the prominent Turkish feminist framework. Nevertheless, with *Life is a Caravanserai* the reader cherishes the visibility of a pluri-verse space. Instead of the modernized, colonized, and secularized social imaginary, we are welcomed to a -Other terrain, namely the "decolonial imaginary".

5.5. *The Bridge of the Golden Horn*: Crossing Borders, Exploring Colonial/Imperial Difference, and Dislodging Colonial/Modern Gender System

> Just one word: Asıldılar ('They have been hanged.'). A peasant, illiterate, held the newspaper the wrong way round, wept, his tears remained caught in his beard. A seagull flew into the ship and its head struck the ship's side. Many mothers walked silently, looking at the ground, across the Bridge of the Golden Horn. They did not say anything, but I hear their voices. 'If one loses one's children, one at first hopes to find them. When one sees they are not coming back, one gets up every day to die. We go on. We cook, we iron, they have torn our bodies apart. Such young necks, so young, like those of a newborn animal… Now life is a couple of lines on a musty sheet paper in the pocket of the officials keeping records… We want our children living. Living they were taken away. Especially, large men, an elite, on horses, have bent down to the alleys, gathered up our children from their horses… Here we stand on the Bridge of the Golden Horn. With these eyes in this blind world we have seen the Day of Judgement'. (252-4)

Towards the end of her second novel, *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn (The Bridge of Golden Horn)* (1998), Özdamar composes this mesmerizing image of another Turkish coup in 1971 after the "May 27" coup d'état in 1960, which she took up in her previous novel. Crossing bridges, boundaries, lands, and traveling between the worlds of gastarbeiters in Germany and starving Kurdish peasants in Southeastern Turkey, the author unveils counter-memories and socio-political traumas primarily on the basis of female sexuality and the female body. In this way, she re-creates an alternative narrative, namely a palimpsest, erasing and re-writing the official historiography of both Turkish and German primarily from a female perspective. Özdamar employs symbolic and literal movements to decolonize the experiences of obscured and stigmatized, specifically female, colonial subjectivities. Her palimpsest-like narrative reveals the darker side,

namely the colonial and imperial side, of socio-political and cultural transitions on the basis of the dislodgment of the colonial/modern gender system.

In brief, the notion of the coloniality of gender put forward by Lugones calls for a scrutiny of "categorical, dichotomous, hierarchical logic as central to modern, colonial, capitalist thinking about race, gender, and sexuality" (2010: 742). She argues that "modernity organizes the world ontologically in terms of atomic, homogeneous, separable categories" (Ibid.). She portrays this as follows:

> Beginning with the colonization of the Americas and the Caribbean, a hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human was imposed on the colonized in the service of Western man. It was accompanied by other dichotomous hierarchical distinctions became a mark of the human and mark of civilization. Only the civilized are men or women. This distinction became a mark of the human and the mark of civilization. Only the civilized are men or women. (743)

As Beverly M. Weber writes, "In her writing Özdamar constantly challenges narratives that obscure female immigration and reminds us that immigrant women in Germany actively shape political movements, significantly contribute to Germany's economy, and are active as intellectuals both within the Turkish-German community and Germany as a whole" (2010: 38). Özdamar's challenge encompasses the dominant narratives related to migrant women, and she aims to give voice to various colonial subjectivities not only within the rapidly expanding capitalist German sociopolitical structure, but also a Turkey which mimics the West and whose ambitious de-orientalization resulted in the subalternization and stigmatization of particular identities and spheres (e.g. Kurds and peasants). Her traveling through the spheres of migrants in Germany and rural Anatolia's muddy peripheries, overshadowed by a spatial and corporeal hierarchy imposed by a (trans)national colonial/imperial difference, which emerges as the "white Turk" discourse in Turkey, transpires through a mesmerizing narrative style. Contrary to the self-orientalizing predominant "white Turk" feminist framework whose modernist, nationalist, and secular perceptions have ignored the presence of certain identities, through *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* these colonial figures appear in disturbing ways.

I will also conduct my close-reading on the grounds of another decolonial feminist notion, Lugones' idea of "world"-travelling, playfulness, and the loving perception. In general terms, the emphasis is on the following:

> Knowing other women's "worlds" is part of knowing them and knowing them is part of loving them. Notice that the knowing can be done in greater or lesser depth, as can the loving. Also notice that travelling to another's "world" is not the same as becoming intimate with them. Intimacy is constituted in part by a very deep knowledge of the other self and "world" travelling is only part of this knowledge. (1987: 17)

For Lugones, then, the truth can merely be spoken by the fool; however, only the trickster can play out without harming (14). In other words, the trickster is aware that she inhabits a myriad of "worlds" and travels across these worlds and keeps all the memories (Ibid.). The trickster is the "world"-traveller as well. Thereby, Özdamar's nameless heroine in the novel comes to the fore as the trickster world traveller. The "world"-traveller, whom we may also label the border shifter, sometimes "has a double image of herself and each self includes as important ingredients of itself one or more attributes that are incompatible with one or more of the attributes of the other self, for example being playful and being unplayful" (Ibid.).

All these features assemble in one common focal point which is the loving perception originating with the mother-daughter relationship by being disloyal to the arrogant perception. Lugones elucidates this in terms of her own perspective towards her mother's positioning within the patriarchal societal construction, whereby her mother appears as a victim of the arrogant perception. However, Lugones notices that she is loyal to the arrogant perceiver's construction (18). She states that she was wrong in assuming her mother's alleged rigid category, so she writes, "I came to realize through travelling to her "world" that she is not foldable and pliable, that she is not exhausted by the mainstream Argentinian patriarchal construction of her I came to realize that there are "worlds" in which she shines as a creative being" (Ibid.). By advising women to adopt such an identification through travelling, she suggests the performance of loving other women which will bring forth encounters with alternative narratives and identities by dismantling the arrogant perceiver in ourselves (Ibid.).

Thus, I will conduct my close reading of Özdamar's novel on the basis of these decolonial paradigms by detecting the fractured locus where the colonial wound is located. Furthermore, I argue that instead of universalizing any epistemology like the zero point epistemology (i.e. Western epistemology), that subtly imposes "every way of knowing and sensing (feeling) that do not conform to the epistemology and aesthesis of the zero point are cast behind in time and/or of myth, legend, folklore, local knowledge,

and the like", Özdamar pursues a distinctive path (Mignolo 2011: 80). Through her distinctive narration and characterization we witness that the author is inventing a pluriverse where difference and multiplicity have the power to compose solidarity and coalition.

The silent mothers passing the bridge of the Golden Horn in *The Bridge* depicted in the quoted passage in the very first page of this part are given voice through Özdamar's narration. According to John Berger, Özdamar's mediating role in transmitting the painful stories of the silent and invisible subjectivities is associated on the one hand with exaggeration and on the other with badness. Firstly, exaggeration prevails in the stories which to Berger is a proof of shared feelings, namely solidarity and coalition-building with respect to my decolonial feminist perspective (2007: x). Exaggeration is to transgress the limits, that is, the norms. Thereby, he asks if it is possible to exaggerate when one is referring directly to reality:

> In its cruelties, its injustices, its repretitiveness, and its gifts, there is nothing more exaggerated than reality. Governors, ruling class, bureaucrats, moralists, judges ceaselessly pretend that reality is not exaggerated. Slaves, citizens, scammers, know otherwise, and mostly they keep quiet about it — except when they are asleep and dream. This is why stories fill the emptiness created by all the official pretences that reality is not exaggerated. (Ibid.)

Stories matter, especially when official historiography is manipulated by the grand narratives. Stories come to display the role of uncovering the invisible side of the Janus-faced colonial/modern and capitalist/patriarchal world system."Badness" is the second notion Berger hints at with close reference to Özdamar's role in giving voice to the silent mothers:

> The great stories she tells here are all about badness, and about those whom the official versions of what is happening in the world continually fix the label bad to. Her stories are the opposite of what mothers tell their young children. They are, however, what the mothers live with. They are about poverty, betrayels, disobedience, cruelties, desperation, wild hopes, lies, deceits, vengeance, pain, helplessness, pain again, endurance, cowardice, taking unreasonable risks and fury. (Ibid.)

It was with *Life is a Caravanserai* that we were introduced to Özdamar's nameless protagonist. With the first novel we have accompanied the birth, the childhood, and lastly her decision to leave for Germany as a worker in order to pursue her acting career. Within this first novel she came forth merely as the tale-gatherer and memory-collector from her

grandmother, mother, and in general the women of Anatolia, the stigmatized dusty peripheries of the Turkish republic of the time.

Soheila Ghaussy provides a parallel interpretation to Berger by revealing that Özdamar's initial novel "exposes the kind of 'truth-telling' implied in the narration of history as a masculinist strategy which codes ideological representation as neutral" (2001: 147). In addition, I envision a division between the first and the second novel, specifically that within the former novel the protagonist was living through an evolution of 'becoming'. The internal and external diasporic articulations were to be formed while collecting folk-tales, idioms, and customs from the women around her. We have also discovered that her mother was once witness to the story-telling Anatolian women:

> A big room. Many women were sitting there on the round earthen stove. Your grandmother was sitting there too among the women on the stove, she had blankets draped over her legs, the stove was round, they sat there, and one woman would tell a story, then another woman would take the last word from her mouth and start telling another story, they were knitting the whole time. (1994: 294)

While Özdamar's little protagonist will ally herself with the lives of these women through tales, her mother's positioning becomes ambivalent with regard to her desire to fit in with the state-implemented social imaginary instead of explicitly resisting it. However, the protagonist in the second novel comes to the fore not merely as a tale-gatherer, but as a woman who strives to loose ties with social, patriarchal, and political restrictions.

As Yasemin Yıldız has put it, the positioning of the protagonist is neither to give into the nationalist, modernist, capitalist, and secularizing dreams of the Kemalist discourse, nor to the Ottoman Empire's patriarchal imaginary, "but with strands of anarchic Anatolian popular culture. The daughter, as the youngest generation, time and again allies herself with the spirit of folk resistance embodied by the grandmother" (2012: 153). This is by no means a coincidence, as for Yıldız "this generational alignment has a particular political connotation" (Ibid.). The socio-political and cultural tension, and the coup d'etat provoked by Atatürk's political party, the Republican Party, whose authoritarian tendencies evoked a bloody military intervention in 1960, have induced a political trauma which leads Özdamar's protagonist to a quest for alternative narratives, subjectivities, and spheres.

Thus, when the protagonist at the end of *Life is a Caravanserai* travels to a town near Mount Ararat located on the Iranian border to visit her father who was building the officers' houses, she gradually begins to grasp that a politically turbulent Turkey is constantly re-inventing power structures. She would define the officers' houses as "sick", because they testify to the oppressive colonial matrix of power affiliated with the geopolitical entanglements of bodies and materials (282). Mount Ararat is a prominent symbol of one of the great Kurdish revolts, the Ararat Revolt, in Turkish Republican history between 1927-1930. Michael M. Gunter in *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds* (2003) argues that those revolts were the continuation of the Sheikh Said uprising in 1925 which was both a Kurdish nationalist and religious reaction against the Kemalist regime (265). These revolts were followed by the notorious Dersim upheaval led by the Kurdish Alevi cleric Sayyid Rıza between 1936-38. Nevertheless, Kemalism as a modernizing doctrine holds that the ideal Turkish image has no place for a Kurdish, or any other national and cultural, identity, an attitude which led to assaults on every element representing a different subjectivity:

> All were brutally crushed, and attempts were made to erase the very name of the Kurds through assimilation and exile. Under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, all Kurdish schools, organization, and publications, as well as religious institutions such as tekiyes (sufi fraternities) and madrasahs (religious schools) were closed. The term Mountain Turks when referring to the Turkish Kurds serves as a code term for these actions. (291)

Thus, the "sick" officers' houses built along Mount Ararat represent the Turkish military force and so bureaucracy who saw it their uppermost duty to suppress, control, and regulate the bodies of Kurds and in general Anatolians living in the eastern and south-eastern regions of Turkey. Özdamar's protagonist, both in the just referred to novel and in *Bridge of the Golden Horn*, is highly perceptive in thinking geo- and body-politically. The military coup, poverty, and divisions that ossified within the society as a result of disparaging notions like "Mountain Turks" and "Anatolians" on the one hand and the elites, bureaucrats, officers on the other lead to the protagonist's choice of a self-imposed physical, literary, and linguistic diasporic subjectivity: "On my way home, there was a man flying a kite from his balcony. I came home and said, 'Mother, I am going to go to Germany to work'" (286). Upon that, Özdamar's first novel ends with the protagonist on her way to Germany by train.

5.5.1. A Fictional Portrayal of the Crossing of "The Bridge"

Like her first novel, Özdamar's second literary work also won an award, this time the Adelbert von Chamisso prize which is conferred on German-language authors of non-german origins. To start with a brief overview of this second novel, the teenage protagonist comes to West Berlin as a guest worker in 1966. She is no more the little tale-gathering girl, but the tale-teller and mediating young woman who transmits stories of mothers, female migrant workers, virgins, and, in general, women with various identical aspects. She is no more the bystander of pain, violence, and oppression, but rather enters a process of becoming an actress and socialist activist young adult with a constantly growing political awareness who started her intellectual journey as a cloistered middle-class Turkish girl in the women's "hossel" that thought Nietzsche was the German prime minister (37). Thus, she initially takes the stage as a gastarbeiter who is learning German and works on a factory assembly line making radios to pursue an acting career in Istanbul. With the arrival of the communist hostel warden and his wife, the protagonist embarks on building on her knowledge of Shakespeare with borrowed works by Gorky, Engels, Brecht, and Büchner. All of a sudden, the scenes shift from portrayals of migrant workers and political upheavals in Germany to Turkey. Particularly in Turkey, political turbulence intensifies, and correspondingly the political commitment of the protagonist grows.

The full appearance of the intersection between Turkish leftism and Kemalist ideology is perceptively observed by the protagonist. As Yael Navaro-Yashin argues in *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (2002), "The cult of Atatürk or Atatürk fetishism is massively reproduced within both the private and public life of particular people as an emblem of the sovereignty of the Turkish state, associated with the institutions and rituals of the state" (188). Accordingly, the protagonist in an implicitly satirical way portrays how in uncanny forms the dead leader possesses a major role both in the right-wing and left-wing communities:

> Around the Atatürk statue in the city centre lay thousands of of soggy flowers and banners of all parties, which were now complaining to Atatürk. The slogans on the banners were: 'Death to the communists' Or: 'Turkey will not be another Vietnam!', 'God will protect the Turks'. Some letters had run because of the heavy rain, and the flower petals and the demonstrators' placards floated down the steep streets of Istanbul towards the sea in the heavy rain. (200)

She cleverly depicts the patriarchal structure within the socialist formation both in Turkey and Germany at the time. Enrolling in the Worker's party and joining left-wing intellectuals in Cinematheque and the Captain restaurant will all become "like an extension of the street" to her (184). However, the coup d'état will result in a severe clampdown on the leftwingers which will lead to the arrest and interrogation of the protagonist due to her journey to Mount Ararat to unveil the poverty and political and military suppression taking place in south-eastern Turkey. As a result, all these traumatic incidents drive her away in the mid-'70s to the Brechtian theatre in East Berlin.

Much like the previous novel, this one also ends with a train to Germany, but with reference to the title which implies a conscious emphasis of the author herself: "From the train window I saw the Bridge of the Golden Horn. Building workers were dismantling it, because a new bridge was to be built. Their hammers echoed as they struck the bridge. The train to Berlin pulled out, from the window I still saw the Bridge of the Golden Horn" (256). The bridge of the title is a significant image as it embodies both hope and despair, home and away, freedom and its opposite, and, in general, the de-linking and linking worlds, languages, and peoples, particularly female subjectivities. Before embarking on a close reading of these female subjecitivities on the basis of colonial/modern gender system, it is necessary to touch upon other aspects of the bridge image. Historically, the Golden Horn has played an important role in linking the two European parts of Istanbul during the periods of Byzantine and later Ottoman rule. It is probably not coincidental that our heroine, in addition to the imperial city of Istanbul, also travels through Paris and Berlin, other inheritors of imperial and colonial histories, and portrays the invisible side of their dark past linked to the present.

In spite of the fact that the depictions of cities are fundamental and prominent features of both Elif Shafak and Özdamar's novels, I would rather deal with this issue in the next chapter under the heading "Chronotope" within the context of decolonial thinking. Thus, if to touch on the bridge image tangentially, that the Bridge of the Golden Horn is used in the title of the novel insinuates a mediating role like the Caravanserai metaphor in the previous work. The author's title and frequent references to the bridge can be interpreted as a reaction towards the Republican and Kemalist perception that made it its ultimate goal in breaking off ties with the multi-confessional, multi-national, and multi-cultural Ottoman heritage. As I have elucidated through the research which

Özdamar also touches upon in her previous novel, the delinking policies resulted in the "othering" and stigmatization of subjectivities and geographies incompatible with the social imaginary of the secular and modern nation-state.

Thereby, the bridge connects rural Anatolia's peasants to the Europe of Turkey, Istanbul. In fact, throughout the novel it is noticeable that the author actively seeks to unveil the "others" of Turkey, namely the peasants from the districts which, specifically, reveals a crucial dimension of the republicanization. As Ayşe Betül Çelik claims with reference to sociologist Bahattin Akşit, "since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkey experienced two major waves of internal migration from the rural areas to urban centers, each with different characteristics" (2005: 139). Çelik writes that a first wave of migration took place from the late 1940s to the early 1980s, which ended up with 4 million peasants moving "to urban centers initially as seasonal workers, and later established themselves as permanent residents" (Ibid.).

A famous rhetoric allegedly declared by Atatürk was that the villager is the real master of the country; however, as Andrew Mango has pointed out, the reality would seem to be the opposite. In his prologue to *The Turks Today* (2004) Mango even argues that when Atatürk died the country outside the main towns like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir was even poorer in many aspects than it had been in the Ottoman era, which apparantly led to mass migration. For Asım Karaömerlioğlu (1999), the peasantist ideology employed by the elite cadre only put emphasis on the transformation of these ordinary peoples into educated and modernized masses to serve the nation. Unsurprisingly, neither the People's Houses nor the Peasantist Divisions, which were foundations of the Kemalist discourse, succeeded in diminishing poverty. Indeed, Özdamar through her narration perceptively depicts the peasants in association with the bridge:

> All these men had been peasants and had come to Istanbul with their rolled-up beds. I often saw them on the Bridge of the Golden Horn. The low bridge across the sea wobbled under their feet, and they walked with their rolled-up beds on top of their heads as if they were walking across the desert which no one could see the end, and as if they were dreaming of arriving at a watering place. The peasants said: 'The streets of Istanbul are paved with gold,' and they travelled six or seven days by truck from their villages to Istanbul, to find work there. (161)

The bridge becomes a way of witnessing and connecting to the colonial subjectivities of the country, "I walked across the the Bridge of the Golden Horn at that moment it was raining, and I thought: 'Jordi, out of the sky, which we sometimes gave our love to bear, love is raining on the shirts of the poor men on the Golden Bridge" (177).

Recollecting memories of her lover Jordi, with whom she had an intense affair in Paris, the heroine instantly intermingles the raining of love with the wet shirts of the poor men on the bridge, "Love is raining on the shirts of the poor men on the Golden Bridge" (177). The scene comes to the fore right after she reads the poems of García Lorca, a Spanish poet assassinated by death squads due to his homosexual and communist identity. Indeed, Jordi is also an anti-fascist Spaniard; however, the major intersection between him and the peasants is the awkward love poem he wrote in broken English to the heroine while saying farewell. The poem is as follows, "Sevgilim/I like Turkish mare,/and your black helmet,/Trotting in Marmara Sea./I see in this occidental Megalopolis,/a joyful poppy,/disturbing all the circulation planning" (107). With regard to the last line of the cited part, "disturbing all the circulation planning", I argue that all these figures, the peasants, poets like Garcia, and the protagonist herself represent border shifters in societies. The bridge symbolically links the Spanish Jordi to the peasants and the leading mediator here indirectly upstages the heroine herself. All the subalternized and marginalized figures of the (trans)national socio-political historiography instantly assemble through the image of the bridge.

Through the protagonist's narration, all of a sudden the bridge expands with regard to its intersectional role. That is, the bridge of the title and its frequent appearance spans the interlinked worlds of the heroine from gastarbeiters in Berlin to peasants in Istanbul and anarchists and poets of various geo-political spaces. Being a director as well, Özdamar succesfully draws our attention to the heroine crossing the bridge with whom time slows down and a slow-motion shooting takes place with a voiceover of the narrator. The ghosts of marginalized figures in history come to life with the rain falling on the shirts of the poor peasants:

> Poverty ran through the streets like an infectious disease. I looked on the poor as on plague victims and could do nothing for them. If I saw a half-man in a wheelchair, I tried to avoid eye contact with him from the front, but my eyes followed him for a long time from behind. It was only the blind that I looked at from the front. To look into the eyes of the poor was very hard. I looked over my left shoulder so often, to see poverty from behind, that my left

> shoulder hurt. On the steep streets there were many book vendors. They laid their books on the ground, and the wind leafed through them, books about the Russian and French Revolutions or about resistance fighters who had been beheaded five hundred years ago by the Ottomans, books by Nazım Hikmet, books about the Spanish Civil War. All killed strangled, beheaded people, who had not died in their beds, rose up in those years. Poverty ran in the streets, and the people who in their lives had wanted to do something about it and had been killed as a result now lay in the streets as books. One only had to bend down to them, buy them, and hence many of those who had been killed entered homes, gathered on the bookshelves next to the pillows and lived in the houses. The people who shut and opened their eyes with these books went out into the streets again in the morning as Lorca, Sacco and Vanzetti, Robespierre, Danton, Nazım Hikmet, Pir Sultan Abdal, Rosa Luxemburg. (177)

The passage touches upon revolutionary figures like Sacco and Vanzetti, Italian immigrants in 1920s America, who were convicted and executed without clear evidence in 1927. That Özdamar adds these two 'immigrant' anarchist heros to her list is of course not coincidental, she is by implication drawing a comparison with the gastarbeiters.

Özdamar, being one of the earliest female immigrant workers in Germany, possesses a deep symphaty with the immigrants Sacco and Vanzetti. Today, though Turkish immigrants are mainly expected to be defined as de facto settlers, the parameters of political discourse "are based on an ethnocentric interpretation of citizenship and nationhood in Germany, which emphasizes 'volknation', a cultural nation, and leads to the political exclusion of ethnic minorities" (Küçükcan 2006). Özdamar worked as a gastarbeiter for a short period, and continued her career as an actress, director, playwright, and novelist; however, questionable reactions towards her literary works revealed the still present culture of othering, racism, and xenophobia in Germany when she was granted the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize in 1991 (Jankowsky 1997). What is more, she was only able to become a German citizen in 1996. German perceptions of *die Ausländer* emphasize the non-belongingness of these non-Germans to the social, cultural, and even literary sphere which we witness with responses to the novels of Özdamar written in German. Another striking sample is the German word *Überfremndung*, meaning "over-foreignization", which was also the title of Max Frisch's short essay that opens with, "*Man hat arbeitscraft gerufen und es kommen Menschen*" ('We called for manpower, but people came instead'). As Rey Chow writes: "A laborer becomes ethnicized because she is commodified in specific ways, because she has to pay for her living by performing certain kinds of work, while these kinds of work, despite being generated from within

that society, continue to reduce the one who performs them to the position of the outsider, the ethnic" (2002: 34).

Images related to immigrants, specifically female immigrants, whom Özdamar portrays in her novel illustrate how the female sexuality and body of the immigrant woman is obscured in Germany's globalizing economical constructions. While a Turkish (i.e. Muslim) woman's production through labour is viewed as her participation in the emancipated and democratic German subjectivity, body- and geo-politics push her towards the inescapable colonial subjectivity. As Beverly M. Weber puts it, "This production of Germanness discursively constructs a specific terrain on which immigrant women, particularly Muslim immigrant women, are 'permitted' to participate in hybrid identities" (2010: 38). Nevertheless, "hybridity" is a very fuzzy notion when it comes to the other side of the coin. I focus on the immigrant women's sexuality and bodies through labour in the upcoming pages.

Lorca, Robespierre, Danton, and Rosa Luxemburg are other revolutionary figures whom she mentions. However, I think that Nazım Hikmet and Pir Sultan Abdal, like the two previously mentioned anarchists, come to the fore more distinctively then the others. Nazım Hikmet is "arguably the most prominent Turkish poet of the twentieth century, whose name has come to be associated with resistance to oppression, exile, and lyric remembrance" (Seyhan 2005: 209). In fact, he also appears as an anarchist (i.e. communist) man of literature who used his pen to resist the Orientalist perceptions of the West. Thereupon, Azade Seyhan translates a featured poem of Hikmet in her work on Özdamar and another female author, Halide Edip Adıvar:

> "Hashish! / Resignation / Kismet! / Golden cages, caravansaries, caravans, gazebos!
>
> A sultan dancing on silver trays. The heir, the padishah, a thousand-year-old shah. Ivory slippers dangle from minarets, women with hennaed noses. Embroider with their toes. Imams in green turbans call the faithful to prayer."
>
> This is the Orient through the eyes of the French poet! This is the Orient image disseminated by books, printed a million a minute! Yet, neither yesterday nor today, nor tomorrow, was there, or ever will be such an Orient! (Ibid.)

Hikmet's critical standpoint did not merely problematize the Orientalism of the West, he also wrote poems which "during the 1920s and 1930s brought him into conflict with increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the Kemalist regime. After shorter periods of imprisonment he was sentenced in 1938 to a total of twenty-eight years on charges of

subversion" (Timms and Göksu 1988: 177). Indeed, one line of poem written by the heroine's Spaniard lover which I mentioned earlier goes, "Sevgilim, I like Turkish mare", which seems to imply a commentary by Nazım Hikmet before he was deprived of his Turkish citizenship in 1951. As Hikmet was once asked about his thoughts on the Kemalist reforms with respect to women's emancipation, to Feroz Ahmad he "remained unimpressed by what seemed to him to be cosmetic changes" and replied, "I do not give any importance to whether women wear their hair long or short; a woman is not a mare. The important thing is that they must work" (quoted in Weber 2010: 52).

Pir Sultan Abdal is another significant figure the heroine recalls who is a sixteenth century Alevi poet. With respect to the Alevi religious literature in which Abdal is an outstanding character, Stephen Suleyman Schwartz states that such literature mainly consisted of "spiritual, songs, poems, and epic verse. The Alevi "cem" combines singing, music, and dancing. Alevis consider themselves spiritual Muslims, or Sufis" (2012). The Alevi identity was considered troubling both by the Ottoman and the Turkish Republic. Though no reliable information exists about him, Pir Sultan Abdal is believed to have led the Kızılbaş rebellions against the Sunni Islamic Ottoman administration which led to his arrest and execution (Somel 2003: 227).

Beginning from the title on the basis of the bridge image that spans the whole novel and the passage I have just analyzed from it, we have seen that Özdamar's emphasis shifts from poverty to all these killed heroes and heroines. The protagonist does not let bygones be bygones. Books about those lost lives are sold on the streets and people buy them "and hence many of those who had been killed entered homes, gathered on the bookshelves next to the pillows and lived in the houses" (177). For her, people who shut and open their eyes with these books were to go out into the streets in the morning (177). Like the bridge metaphor, death stands for continuation by the books lying on the street right at the end from the bridge of the Golden Horn.

It is noticeable that the author frequently draws circles instead of portraying any tendency towards linearity. That is, the heroine in the novel regularly commutes between two countries (Turkey and Germany), socio-linguistic spheres, identities in the acting school, and the Asian and European sides of Istanbul. The shifting of boundaries should probably be interpreted as a call for ambivalance by dislodging rigid boundaries of

nationalism and colonial/imperial difference on the basis of Germany's perception of immigrants and Turkey's own colonial subjectivities and geographies. Nevertheless, one should remain sceptical of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial notion of "hybridity", as decolonial thinker Madina Tlostanova states with reference to Maria Lugones:

> Lugones argues that a persuasive affirming position does not lie in rethinking the relations with the oppressor from the position of the oppressed. Rather it lies in the development of the logic of difference and multiplicity as well as in creating coalitions in these points of difference. Multiplicity must be maintained at the point of reduction and not erased through hybridity which only masks the colonial difference. In this respect Lugones echoes the idea of opacity as articulated by E. Glissant (Glissant 1997: 190). Hybridity is localized in the complex work of the myriads of logics which are never synthesized, but rather transcend the boundaries and limitations. The logic of many colonial differences meet at the logic of oppression. (2010: 45)

That we are not expected to infer an end with death, paradoxically, is to dismantle the imposed secular time which particularly in the Turkish context, possesses a dichotomous logic that invents a conceptualization of time. Within the logic of dichotomy it is inevitable to re-invent the logic of power which to Lugones "always strives to take the multiplicity to unity" (Ibid.). Özdamar is precisely problematizing this vision of breaking off, or rather the categorization of socio-political historiography that embarks on a specified pre-modern period, which is utilized to impose another imaginary time cycle that constantly stigmatizes the former in order to implement a colonial/modern power structure.

As Toni Alaranta writes in *Contemporary Kemalism: From Universal Secular-Humanism to Extreme Turkish Nationalism* (2014), since the 1920s the fight against imperialism (i.e. the Ottoman Empire) is identified as a Turkish revolution, or alternatively as an Atatürk Revolution, which according to the Kemalist interpretation "marks the beginning of Turkish enlightenment that modernised and Westernised the Turkish state and society" (3). Surely, the Turkish enlightenment was an imported version of the Western Enlightenment which has been stressing a linear concept of time that cannot be conceived of as seperate from the language of modernity, progress, and development by defining a point of arrival (Mignolo 2011: 164). According to Mignolo, the universalized so-called secular time invented by Western societies intersects with the concept of "time/space in the organization of memory and society" (159).

In relation to Özdamar's texts, Meliz Ergin emphasizes that both nationalist and post-nationalist approaches to diaspora and so to diasporic literary works remains insufficient: "Whereas the former promotes two rigid worlds that sustain no genuine interaction, the latter—which has arisen in reaction to the former in the 1990s—dismisses the value of national identity altogether, and promotes deterritorialized, free-floating hybridities" (2009: 91). Therefore, for the diasporic female protagonist even death does not occupy an unchanging positioning in relation to its articulation as an end. In fact, death emerges as a vehicle, namely a threshold, that will connect her. Death provides her with the sense of mediating between worlds, cosmologies, and colonial subjectivities. In this way, death frequently appears as an essential phenomenon through the life of the protagonist – it was her grandmother in *Life is A Caravanserai* who taught her granddaughter to link with dead people through prayers.

For the protagonist, death is two-dimensional as very often it appears in tales her mother and grandmother narrate to her. Within the first pages of *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* in which we start to accompany the heroine in her early days in Berlin as a worker, the protagonist recalls the following:

> When my mother and grandmother told stories, they talked a great deal about people who had died. I had learned their names by heart, listed them every night in bed and gave prayers for their souls. That took an hour. My mother said: If one forgets the souls of the dead, their souls will be in pain'. In the first nights in Berlin I prayed for the dead, too, but I quickly grew tired, because we had to get up so early. I fell asleep before I had said all the names of my dead. So I slowly lost my dead in Berlin. I thought, when I go back to Istanbul, I will start to count my dead again there. I had forgotten the dead, but I had not forgotten my mother. I lay down in bed to think about my mother. But I did not know how one thinks about mothers… But how does one think about a mother? (10-1)

Like the passage from the *The Bridge* that opened this section of the chapter in which the protagonist listens to the voices of the untold stories of the silent mothers, the mother figure represents linking with other worlds, subjectivities, and other cosmologies. The heroine would forget the dead, but not her mother and other mothers along with their tales and memories –untold counter-memories of pain, oppression, and violence. This is the focalpoint of my close-reading of *The Bridge* which is structured on the nexus between mothers and daughters, namely womanhood, by taking no account of blood ties. The primary emphasis is on how their sexuality and body is perceived within the colonial/modern and capitalist/patriarchal world system.

5.6. Exploring the "Mother" Metaphor and Lugones' "Loving Perception" in the Novel

The 'mother' metaphor is significant in the *The Bridge* as it stands for the link between various generations of women. Indeed, the current Turkish feminist framework's impasse is related to this break with the so-called Ottoman and Anatolian anarchic women whom they regard as pre-modern, backwards, Oriental, and impotent victims of patriarchal socio-politcal structures. As I have argued in detail in Chapter Two, the widely accepted official discourse and standpoint of the mainstream Turkish feminist paradigm insinuates a questionable parallel with certain Western feminists who engage in "orientalist approaches" while treating "Islam as a unitary ideology" (Kandiyoti 1987: 317). It is not merely Islam, but rather any epistemology save the zero point epistemology (i.e. Western epistemology) which are based on discourses like folkore, mysticism, and local knowledge which are despised and ostracized.

However, Özdamar's narrative seems to possess the intention of dislodging such a hierarchy based on the body- and geo-politics of knowledge. The loving perception grants her protagonist a means of seeing with the eyes of her mother and her grandmother, who does not appear in *The Bridge* but was a major Anatolian anarchist female figure in *Life is a Caravanserai*. In this way, the protagonist travels also to the worlds of other mothers, whose silence is voiced by her, and their counter-memories inspire the palimpsest-like narrative of the heroine herself. Such a portrayal has close connections with Lugones' notions of loving perception and travelling:

> Loving my mother also required that I see with her eyes, that I go into my mother's world, that I see both of us as we are constructed in her world, that I witness her own sense of herself from within her world. Only through this travelling to her "world" could I identify with her because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. Only then could I see her as a subject even if one subjected and only then could I see at all how meaning could arise fully between us. We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated, we are lacking. So travelling to each other's "worlds" would enable us to be through loving each other. (1987: 8)

By a world she does not mean a utopia at all, as a utopia to Lugones does not count as a world. Rather, this is a world in her sense which is inhabited by flesh and blood people. However, "it may also be inhabited by some imaginary people. It may be inhabited by

people who are dead or people that the inhabitants of this "world" met in some other "world" and now have in this "world" in imagination" (9).

Thereby, the image of death in the novel appears as an obscured phenomenon which has affinity with the mother figure. Thus, within the decolonial imaginary "mother" and "death" obtain multiple meanings and both may correspond with an end and a beginning at the same time. This implies the in-betweenness of the heroines herself, who cross borders, languages, identities, and a myriad of spheres. As a result, I argue that the protagonist's positioning of herself as neither here nor there leads to an indirect criticism of manifold paradigms that universalize their perceptions and ideologies. Through the novel neither communism nor other ideologies like Kemalism are taken for granted and justified as flawless. Neither the breaking from past of the Kemalist influenced visions (e.g Neo-Kemalist feminism) today nor, for example, the Neo-Ottoman mentality of some Turkish Islamists is viewed as helpful in resolving the difficulties that prevent coalition, recognition, and solidarity between prominent Turkish feminisms and a variety of female subjectivities.

On the other hand, it is necessary to highlight that, for Özdamar, gender and sexuality are never static categories, and she underlines this in her first novel. By portraying ambivalent male and female figures in association with the expected stereotypical masculinity/femininity in the patriarchal imagery, she escapes power relations and constructs a third space, namely the decolonial imagery. Her narrative parodies and performs the "feminine" and thus the "masculine". If femininity is not tied to the female body, neither is the mother image. As Soheila Ghaussy argues, female sexuality and body "is staged as a performance of stereotypically gendered roles through which the characters acquire shifting sexual identities" (1999: 8).

Within the novel, the heroine and her friends are for the first time taken to the Turkish Workers' Association by the communist hostel warden. There for the first time the protagonist meets with Turkish men in Berlin and is also introduced to Hamza, formerly a peasant who has become a worker and is searching for a woman to satisfy his sexual drive. Later on he will not find any and will start cooking for the girls: "He cooked beans and lamb for us three girls. He had a thick moustache and was wearing a headscarf. When he cooks, he said, he copies his grandmother, so that there were two people in the

room. In a woman's voice he sang a Turkish song about a garden, in which flowers have bloomed" (33). The heroine and her girlfriends continue going to the Workers' Association and continue exploring their mothers and grandmothers through the Turkish workers: "In some Turkish workers we three girls found our mothers again. They cooked for us. When these men spoke, the voices of their mothers came out of their mouths. I loved these mothers and we could see these mothers or their grandmothers in the bodies of the men. It was nice to see the body of a man in which many women lived" (34). Gender is totally blurred in the author's narrative, and through parody the protagonist subverts the limitations of gender codings which are assumed to be manifested bodily.

Meanwhile, back to the image of death in the novel, the protagonist links death to the mother image and the communist perception on the basis of the mother-child relationship. Thus, when one day she asks her communist hostel warden if she could become a communist herself, he lends her *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* by Engels. For her, the striking part of the book will be that about kinship bonds and marriage:

> Descent was reckoned not from the father but from the mother. Only mothers were valid. The mother of the child was known, but not who the father was. It reminded me of Turkish funerals. When a person dies, he is carried in a coffin to the cemetery, then he is taken out of the coffing, four men grip the sheet in which the dead man is lying and lay the dead man in the grave. The imam from the mosque calls out his name with the name of his mother: 'Osman, the son of Leyla'. The name of the father of the dead man is not called out. (68)

Indeed, this is an Islamic ritual widely performed by imams as, grippingly, it is told that the mother of the dead person is in general known while the father's kinship is suspicious. That the heroine links an Islamic ritual to a communist societal structure is consciously enacted by the author herself. As Meliz Ergin touches upon with reference to Leslie Adelson, Islam and Communism emerge as two mirror opposites of the capitalist principles of Germany and the socio-political taboos resulting from Kemalist ideology in modern Turkey (2009: 104). As Adelson puts it, both Islam and Marxism feature a mystic language and vision that obscure social relations under capitalism (quoted in Ergin):

> Engels said that the tapeworm deserved the palm for faithfulness, 'which has a complete set of male and female organs in each of its 50-200 proglottides or sections, and it spends its whole life copulating in all its sections which itself'. Women who had lots of husbands reminded me of the Hollywood stars Zsa Zsa Gabor, Liz Taylor and of Turkish peasant women. Their husbands went to the big city to work, worked there as porters or as construction workers, slept on the building site, died young or died in the war and their

> wives were given to their brothers as wife. So the Turkish women from the villages also had many husbands. (68)

Thus, once the protagonist associates Engels' theories on the communist social construction both with Hollywood actresses and with Anatolian women, she interlinks female images of the Western modern world with the alleged pre-modern Anatolian peasant women and dismantles the strict dichotomy between them, in this way inventing a third space, namely a decolonial imaginary, in which a myriad of multiplicities exist not in homogenity but with the logic of difference.

Strikingly, through the novel we sense that while the heroine is becoming a socialist and ends up that way, she does not sanctify socialism or any other ideology or belief system. In her stimulating work on Özdamar, Beverly M. Weber details a main feature of the writer's literary work as follows:

> Özdamar's writing of the past articulates a transnational history of left movements as well as a critique of the inability for these movements to adequately address the concerns of the woman guestworker. While *Die Brücke vom goldenen Horn* engages with issues of oppression, it does not reduce the position of women to the victim of an immutable Turkish or Muslim culture, but situates her characters in a complex struggle with intersecting social structures. Özdamar's writing thus exists at a complex nexus of resistance – not only to the tendencies to write immigrant, especially Turkish, women as victims of cultural oppression, but also to a national history that enables this reduction, or a supranational history that does the same through the writing of 'Western' civilisation. (2010: 51)

Therefore, I interpret her standpoint as mainly coinciding with a decolonial understanding.

Özdamar strives to understand Engels by applying the fundamentals he puts forward with samples from her own background, the Anatolian women. First of all, this gives visibility and thus subjectivity to these Anatolian women whom we will initially see as immigrant women in Berlin in *The Bridge*. This way, Özdamar highlights these women's differences in terms of the geo- and body-politics of knowledge. This is conducted to grant these migrant women a decolonial shift within the colonial power matrix which subtly manifests hybridity in order to function within the German context "in order to make German cultural industries viable in a globalised cultural market, at a time when a peculiar biopolitics seeks to regulate immigration and immigrants in order to ensure the future of an ageing society without threatening notions of Germanness" (38). Deniz Göktürk, drawing on ideas of of hybridity and the "third space", writes: "While celebrating this 'third space', however, we ought to be cautious not to forget about local

specificities and differences as we create a third box for "mixed pickles" and group all the hybrids together in a space of 'in betweenness'" (2000).

Thus, Özdamar's frequent allusions to the construction of female sexuality and the body within the capitalist socio-political structure of Germany's economy unveils the fact that, "Whether otherness is feared or celebrated, it is often played out in highly gendered tropes" (Weber 2010: 38). Therefore, Özdamar constantly challenges dominant narratives which blur female immigration on the basis of colonial/imperial difference and presents us female workers who "significantly contribute to Germany's economy, and are active as intellectuals both within the Turkish-German community and Germany as a whole" (Ibid.). On the other hand, as Weber notes, "Highly sexualised images have dominated representations of immigrant women in German popular media. In particular since the late 1980s, the immigrant woman has been understood often in terms of a repressed sexuality threatened by backward, nonmodern, and thus non-European 'cultures'" (39). Grand narratives have been deployed which portrayed immigrant women as "domestically abused woman, perpetually in danger of being punished by her male relatives for her sexual indiscretions" (Ibid.). As Weber writes:

> These popular images have dovetailed with dominant academic discourses, producing a powerful 'alliance' that greatly restricts the possibilities for representations of immigrant women in German society. The widespread false assumption among migration scholars that there were no or few female guestworkers, and that immigrant women arrived in Germany almost exclusively as the spouses of immigrating workers – as part of so-called marriage migration, therefore – reveals the power of these representations. Indeed, some studies use the notion of 'culture' to explain the 'lack' of female labour migration. (39-40)

Even Nermin Abadan-Unat, a Turkish feminist scholar, in her recent study *Turks in Europe: From Guest Worker to Transnational Citizen* (2011), gives into the dominant narratives exhibited by scholars like Heather Booth, who in *The Migration Process in Britain and West Germany* (1992) argued that, "Turkish women, who are mostly of Muslim faith, might be expected to comprise the smallest proportion of labour in-migrants from any sending countries" (127).

Contrary to scholars like Abadan-Unat, Özdamar's *The Bridge* is quite succesful in portraying the other side of the coin, as Weber notes:

> Studies of Özdamar, for example, pay scant attention to the fact that her main characters, mostly women, work in German factories, immigrate as guestworkers, participate in political movements, and undergo political and intellectual transformations in ways that

> illustrate productive crossings of cultures already intimately bound up in one another. (2010: 41)

The scholar criticizes literary and textual studies, especially among North American scholars who focus on the cultural hybridity in Özdamar's narrative rather than "the immigrant woman as a worker or participant in politics" (Ibid.). What is more, "Özdamar's criticism has been indicative of an important shift from examining artistic production by immigrants from a reductively sociological perspective to both treating this body of work as art as well as reading it in order to examine and critically engage with notions of multiculturalism and hyphenated German identities" (Ibid.). Crossing national, socio-political, and linguistic borders initially as a gastarbeiter has obviously provided the author with an opportunity to obtain awareness about the colonial/imperial difference between the Muslim/Turkish identified immigrant workers, namely the colonial subjectivities of the growing capitalist imperial German power structures.

A second major awareness is situated in her critical analysis taking aim at the impotent aspects of the leftist discourse in practice and theory. Both of these objects are central to Özdamar's narrative in which she explores female sexuality and the commodification of the female body by putting women into the history of gastarbeiters. Correspondingly, Özdamar with a haunting narrative perceptively depicts how factory work affects women's bodies:

> I lived with lots of women in a women's workers' hostel. We said hossel. We all worked in the radio factory, each one of us had to have a magnifying glass in our right eye while we were working. Even when we came back to the hossel in the evening, we looked at one another or the potatoes we were peeling with our right eye. A button came off, the women sewed the button on again with a wide-open right eye. The left eye always narrowed and remained half shut. We also slept with the left eye a little screwed up, and at five o'clock in the morning, when we were looking for our trousers or skirts in the semi-darkness, I saw that, like me, the other women were looking only with their right eye. Since starting work in the radio valve factory we believed our right eye more than our left eye. (7)

Here we see how women's working bodies go through a process of mechanization and dehumanisation. Accordingly, the protagonist continues with the depiction of female workers whom we see as detached from their bodies:

> While we were working we lived in a single picture: our finger, the neon light, the tweezers, the little radio valves and their spider legs. The picture had its own voices, we detached ourselves from the voices of the world and from our own bodies. The spine disappeared, the breasts disappeared, the hair on one's head disappeared. Sometimes I had to sniff up mucus. I put off sniffing up the mucus for longer and longer, as if doing it could break up the enlarged picture in which we lived. When the Turkish interpreter came and her shadow

> fell on this picture, the picture tore like a film, the sound disappeared and there was a hole. Then, we looked at the interpreter's face, I again heard the voices of the aeroplanes, which were somewhere in the sky, or a metal thing fell on the factory floor and made an echo. I saw that at the very moment that the women interrupted their work, dandruff fell on to their shoulders. (8)

All this contributes to the construction of a "non-gendered mass identity created for the workers" (Weber, 2010; 46). The erasure of heterosexuality and the invention of hybrid figures aims at "the constitution of the immigrant body from which a certain labour-value can be extracted in order to keep Germany functioning economically" (Ibid.). This non-subejctivity and non-gendered identification through labour is dislodged via portayals of female images in the hostels where they live. Thus, when women are back from the radio valve factory they regain their life and bodies:

> The sound of boiling water, hissing frying pans mixed with their thin, thick voices, and everything rose in the kitchen air, their words, their faces, their different dialects, the gleam of knives in their hands, the bodies waiting for the shared pots and pans, nervously running kitchen tap water, a stranger's spit on a plate. It looked like the shadow plays in traditional Turkish theatre. In it figures came on to the stage, each speaking their own dialect- Turkish, Greeks, Turkish Armenians, Turkish Jews, different Turks from different towns and classes and with different dialects – they all misunderstood each other, but kept on talking and playing like the women in the hossel, they misunderstood each other in the kitchen, but handed each other other knives or pots, or one rolled up another's pullover sleeve, so that it did not hang into the pot. (16)

Here we see an image full of vibrancy and the complete opposite of the factory scene in which capitalist ideology effects the demystification of gender and sexuality.

With regard to women's alienation from their bodies Weber argues that, "The bodies of the women are suspended from life through their engagement in their monotonous work", and in this way the control of labour becomes flawless. Özdamar's depictions display a deeply physical response to the conditions of work which are basically ignored or underestimated by scholars studying the Turkish diaspora in terms of the invisible power relations processed through labour. For instance, Nermin Abadan-Unat in her work on Turkish guestworkers merely emphasizes the following: "Turkish female labour was concentrated in the areas of textiles, tailoring, electronics, and food packaging. From a physical perspective this was not particularly tiring work, given the technological developments in these areas of industry" (2011: 91). Thereby she argues that in 1963, "74.5 percent of women were offered the opportunity to be seated while working" (Ibid.). However, via Özdamar's heroine's narrative we witness the concealed

capitalist and imperial functioning of the growing German economy that hegemonically works through labour migration.

Unlike Özdamar, what Abadan-Unat and other scholars give into is the colonial/modern and patriarchal/capitalist world system based on the hubris of the zero point epistemology (i.e. Western-based epistemology). This point can be illustrated by an article of Abadan-Unat entitled, "Implications of Migration on Emancipation and Pseudo-Emancipation of Turkish Women" (1977). Succumbing to a reductionist attitude she writes that, "traditionally trained, non-migratory motivated women were strongly urged by their fathers, husbands, or other relatives to take up industrial jobs in foreign countries by which they could secure lucrative positions with higher income possibilities for their male relatives" (31). She also adds that, "the nature of prevailing, repetitive, relatively simple, monotonous jobs have not created any significant disturbances" to these women (37).

Nonetheless, when we switch back to the passages from *The Bridge* one senses how the monotony of those professions conceals the dehumanisation and non-gendering features that serve the capitalist system. In fact, the feminist scholar's primary object through the research is to argue that though migration is a component of modernization promoting emancipation of women, here Anatolian women, it mainly resulted in a "pseudo-emancipation" (55). Noticeably, she in no case discusses female guestworkers who, like Özdamar's protagonist and her friend Rezzan, were pursueing acting careers, or other women who wanted to become opera singers or merely migrated for educational purposes. Unlike Abadan-Unat and many other migration scholars, "Özdamar inserts women into the history of guestworkers... [She] understands the left movements of the 1960s and 1970s as transnational movements, and includes intellectuals in the history of Turkish-German immigration" (Weber 2010: 43).

Thus, as I have previously stated, it was with the arrival of the communist hostel warden and his wife that the protagonist gradually becomes interested in leftist ideology and starts to build on her knowledge of communism by borrowing books from the hostel warden. Nevertheless, by occupying an ironic and intimate narrative the protagonist observes and unveils the shortcomings of the leftist discourse. I have formerly referred to the heroine's difficulty in reading the Turkish translation of Friedrich Engels's *The*

Origins of the Family and presented her decolonial attitude in dealing with the theories by linking them with Hollywood actresses and Anatolian female peasants with many husbands. However, the difficuly in applying the fundamentals of Marxism to the gastarbeiter heroine's working body makes "no sense in terms of the concrete lived experience of work on the part of the characters" in the novel (51):

> When I did not understand something I often read the price given on the back— so many lira. The word lira reassured me, because it was easy to understand. Then I opened the book again. In the factory I sometimes went up to Angel, who had already read a lot because of Ataman, and asked her what production meant. She turned to me, the lens in her right eyes, and said: 'I do not know, it is what we do here.' We made radio valves. I looked at her right eye enlarged behind the lens. She had very beautiful eyes, and at that moment I believed I had understood what the word production meant. But when I went back to my chair, I forgot it again. Then came the word reproduction. (68)

Initially, the passage seems to evoke a naive struggle in striving to understand the meanings of production and reproduction. In fact, this would be merely half true as Özdamar's narrative implicitly touches upon the inability of the theoretical language of Marxism to reach the workers. As Weber argues, "The theories of production and reproduction are in part insufficient because they do not engage the simultaneous experiences of displacement and loss experienced by the migrant workers" (2010: 51). Moreover, the obsession with theorizing workers' experiences through 'words' is implicitly criticized via the narrative, with the protagonist indicating the difference between the language of the older people and the newly appearing and revolting leftist students. The nameless heroine would liken these leftist students to surgeons when encountering enemies: "All the students had big ears, because they heard every word and, like surgeons, immediately dissected them. There were constant post-mortems on the words used, then there were post-mortem reports, which in turn required postmortems" (120). For her, things mainly seem to be merely about words to which Turkish political students also get involved:

> The Turkish political students also liked to dissect the words. When they dissected words, it looked as if they were holding a medical textbook in their right hand and a scalpel in their left. They stood in a circle around the words and read in German how to dissect, then translated it into Turkish and tried it out. They looked like very inexperienced word surgeons, who were just learning to dissect. There were many wrong cuts. (Ibid.)

The wrong cuts resulting from inexperienced dissecting strategies is not just associated with words, the heroine underlines that it also resulted in dissecting behaviours which she problematizes through an incident linked to Özdamar's perception about sexuality.

Özdamar's appeal in structuring an alternative narrative through a sexual-coming-of-age that manifests sexual freedom as a primary principle of the intellectual and political growth somehow clashes with a Turkish female student's reaction towards her when the heroine takes the arm of the woman. Hereby, the Turkish female student would ask her to take her arm away so that other people would not think that they were lesbians. This astonishes the protagonist as back in Istanbul she would always walk arm in arm with women, while men too walk that way but no one would think them to be homosexuals. Rather, no one would interpret this as a sign of sexuality. Basically, the main focus here is the controversial truth in terms of the practice which lies beneath the slogans speaking about freedom of these movements.

5.7. The Commodification of the Female Body and Sexuality in *The Bridge*

As a whole, Özdamar's objective in employing an ironic language while holding a critical standpoint targeting Marxism is to question its competence in reaching the displaced workers who live out the impact of global capitalism. As decolonial thinker Anibal Quijano puts it with reference to the constitution of America in *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America* (2000):

> The new historical identities produced around the foundation of the idea of race in the new global structure of the control of labor were associated with social roles and geohistorical places. In this way, both race and the division of labor remained structurally linked and mutually reinforcing, in spite of the fact that neither of them were necessarily dependent on the other in order to exist or change. (536)

The constructed new dualism built on race is indisputably intersectional with gender formations. Thus, the "spatial/temporal and imperial/colonial differences are organized and interwoven" which Quijano terms "the colonial matrix of power" (quoted in Mignolo 2007: 476). Taking Özdamar's sarcastic narrative into account, what remains unsaid is the fact that the concepts of emancipation put forward by Marxism do not question the logic of coloniality. Because via her narrative we realize that essential notions of the Marxist discourse like production are deficient in engaging with the loss and sense of diaspora experienced by the gastarbeiter. In that sense, obscuring female sexuality and the body within power structures grounded in the capitalist/patriachal and modern/colonial world system remain unresolved. Within the logic of coloniality, gender comes to the fore as a major empowerment vehicle in the formation of the radical dualism that overlaps with race.

Within this context, while putting women into the history of the leftist movements both in Turkey and Germany, Özdamar highlights the sexism of targeting female sexuality and the commodification of the female body at work in it. According to Weber, "Given the atmosphere of cultural Othering via sexual Othering in which Özdamar writes, her choice of structuring her narrative as a sexual coming of age becomes an alternative narrative of sexuality as well, one in which sex is the structuring principle of intellectual and political growth, not a manifestation of oppression due to her culture" (2010: 43). Via the narrative of the heroine, we witness her experiencing a confusing gendered positioning in the leftist movement. On the one hand, the movement provides her space both in Germany and Turkey to explore her sexuality, but then "they also provide little space for women's participation as political subjects" (47). When the protagonist sleeps with the "limping Socialist" in Berlin, and tells him that she is a virgin, he fears that she will force him into marriage, for "in Turkish newspapers there were often news items like that" (123). Nevertheless, the limping Socialist, a German, does not realize that he himself commodifies her sexuality via his speech. As he assumes "that this is a 'Turkish' approach to female sexuality, but reveals himself as bound by an ideology that commodifies the female body as much as he presumes Turkish men are" (Weber 2010: 47). As the heroine gradually becomes a regular in socialist circles, she becomes aware of the fact that autonomous female sexuality is frequently obscured within a highly patriarchal atmosphere.

Back in Turkey, the heroine observes that "within the left movements, both in Turkey and Germany, the female body serves on a particular stage to provide the necessary sexuality to be consumed by the men" (Ibid.). Thereupon, the protagonist would present a myriad of Turkish leftist male images with whom she either sleeps or just accompanies, such as the intellectuals with whom she regularly meets at the Captain restaurant. At the Captain restaurant, where the leftist intellectuals meet, each man asks subject they should discuss. However, no one asks the heroine's opinion on any specific topic: "No one asked me what I thought about a subject; to them I played the part of the audience, they played with one another, and I watched them." (178). In between their conversations they sometimes would ask her just to sing old songs from the days of the Ottoman Empire.

Only once does an intellectual resembling an owl ask her opinion, but then with a further close-reading after sleeping several times with him we realize he possesses similar patriarchal tendencies. After she becomes a member of the Workers' Party she and the intellectuals would be invited to the "Owl's" house. There all the men leave her sleeping in a room and go to gather on the balcony to hold discussions: "All the men were standing there in a group in their dark suits, smoking and looking at the sea" (186). This scene reminds me of George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) in which the main character Winston has a meet-up with his lover Julia in a rented room. After sex the couple stay in bed, and Winston reads Julia proscribed books. In these scenes we see Julia fall asleep while Winston continues reading. Both Julia from Orwell's novel and Özdamar's heroine share the positioning of exploring space to perform their sexuality. Their standpoint does not go further than just being stereotypically passive sleeping beauties whose bodies and so their sexuality are valued for consumption by male figures. That is, while Julia and Özdamar's nameless protagonist are meant to be revolutionary female figures, we see that the patriachal perception lying beneath specific discourses only provides them pseudo-autonomy in a new age version of the 'sleeping beauty'.

Within the novel, Kerim comes forward as the Marxist lover of the protagonist whom she meets at the Captian restaurant as well. Kerim is the son of an old middle-class family who is sent to Italy to study architecture, but comes back as a Marxist film maker. His family has rejected him and do not want to support his film projects. However, through Kerim we see the ultimate commodification of the female body with him telling her about the Chinese girls who have gained consciousness with Mao's revolution:

> While Kerim rubbed a ripe peach against my naked right breast and then ate it, I thought about a little Chinese girl and her consciousness. I did not talk much to Kerim, because I did not know how conscious my sentences were. He said, 'The Italian actress Anna Magnani only dresses in black. She is a very good, conscious actress.' I immediately began to dress in black as well, and wanted to be Anna Magnani and the Chinese girl for him. (195)

The commodification of female sexuality and the body is perceptively portrayed by the heroine – this positioning is 'granted' to her by a male-centred discourse robbing her of her voice, her subjectivity. Despite not gaining any voice here, "the narration of this book belies that silence" (Weber 2010: 47).

Particularly within the Turkish leftist movement we see the operation of the modern/colonial gender system. The emancipating rhetoric of modernity, namely the civilizing mission, is a colonial power matrix that is grounded in a hierarchical gender dichotomy. The Turkish leftist ideology never really problematized the language of progress, newness, and emancipation which fuel gendered and colonial subjectivity. As Madina writes:

> Decolonization of gender then presupposes questioning of the very invention of secular modernity and its negatively marked other – tradition associated with backwardness, patriarchy, humiliation, violence, filth, ignorance and a lack of a coherent gendered subjectivity. Through the prism and at the crossing of gender, ethnic-racial, bodily and religious relations decolonial feminism attempts to look at the ways of decolonizing of thinking, of being, of gender and of knowledge, freeing it from the established paradigms, intellectual grounds, human taxonomies, imposed by Western modernity and based on the dichotomy of the same and the other, subject and object, man and woman, heterosexualism and homosexuality, etc. ("On Post-Soviet Imaginary and Global Coloniality" 2011)

Özdamar tries not to give into this dichotomous logic implemented by the colonial/modern gender system. She insistently employs a mischievous language filled with irony mainly directed at the political idealists and intellectuals of her day. These are usually self-important male intellectuals like her lover Kerim whom she defines to a hard-working prostitute as not working because "he is a theorist". On this, a poet friend of Kerim tells her: "You believe too much in the written word. Stalin was a murderer, because he believed in the written word, because he was a student of theology. Stop believing in the texts" (231).

5.8. Dislodging Borders Constructed by the Turkish Version of Modern/Colonial Power Structures

Özdamar's heroine is an in-between female figure, a border drifter/shifter. With a friend named Haydar she decides to go to the Iranian border in south-eastern Turkey to write a report about the starving Kurdish peasants. This part of the novel reveals the darkside of the Republican reformist project that succumbed to nationalism, and the colonial/modern power system that stigmatized these so-called "Mountain Turks" in the dusty peripheries of the country. After rapid depictions of cities like Berlin and Istanbul time suddenly slows down and the scenes from south-eastern Turkey come to the fore as if bit by bit:

> The town we had come to was called Diyarbakır. The truck driver said: 'Be careful, there are many Kurds here.' We stood by a dusty road, next to a dried-up river; a dusty dog went past limping, a dusty peasant held his pitchfork in his hand. He had already been waiting a

> long time with his wife for a truck that could give them a lift. His wife slept on the ground in the dust and had covered herself with all her children. One of the children was awake, looked on the ground for something to eat and ate dirt from the street. The dust of the street had collected in an old Coca-Cola bottle. Dead mosquitoes stuck to the children's dusty hair… A little girl cried, her hair looked as if it was made of old wool, her tears drew stripes on her dusty face. I asked her, 'Why are you crying' She did not understand me. (213)

This passage uncovers the ethnicism which has been internalized due to the Turkification process inspired by Kemalist ideology. When reaching the region the truck driver instantly warns them against the Kurds as if they might harm the young travelers. Via the narration we see that these people are almost put in quarantine and are totally paralysed psychologically and physically. On the other hand, the scene in which a little crying girl does not understand the question directed at her by the protagonist demonstrates the catastophic failure of homogenizing Kemalist politics. Another troubling scene is presented when the heroine has a conversation with a peasant:

> The peasant said: 'We ate the leaves from the trees, like animals, but now there are not even leaves left. We are dead, my daughter. No one gives us their hand. In this blind world we have seen the Day of Judgement. The children dies like blossoms that the wind blows from the branches. Tell the state it should drop poisons from the helicopters. We will eat it, then we all will die. (219)

Within these scenes the traveling protagonist and her friends are followed by policemen who, like the military in the region, keep an eye on the "Mountain Turks" and unexpected visitors like them. Indeed, at the end of the novel we learn that her travel to the dusty peripheries of the country to witness and report on the subalternization of the colonial subjectivities is one of the reasons for her brief imprisonment. Contrary to the leftist intellectuals' purely theory-based standpoint, the young heroine naively but daringly crosses unwanted borders. The protagonist had already critically observed the confusing images of leftists who were distinguished from the workers in the Cinemateque and the Captain restaurant: "One night belonged to the workers to sleep in", and stay up early for work again, "and the other belonged to the intellectuals to keep on talking" (165).

At the end of the novel the 1971 coup takes place and the army brings down the government with the support of Atatürk's political party, CHP. Straightaway, the army banned the Workers' Party because the members were accused of spreading new propaganda for the Kurds: "The millitary banned all films and plays in which topics like theft and kidnapping occured. They banned trade unions and meetings. If more than three people went into a house together, they were suspect" (242). Hereby the protagonist adds

that behind the walls of the house she could hear the weeping of mothers and fathers. At the time she would start wearing a ring welded from a bullet like the Palestinian Fatah guerrilla Leila Khaled. This can be interpreted as her decolonizing stance when compared to other Turkish socialist figures. As the Turkish left at the time had already started a period of redefining itself on the basis of the Kemalist ideology and increasingly insisted on the language of progress, newness, civilization, and development from a questionable theoretical standpoint. Martin Riexinger in his article "Turkey, Completely Independent! Contemporary Turkish Left-WİNG Nationalism (Ulusal Sol/Ulusalcılık): Its Predecessors, Objectives and Enemies" (2010) argues that, "After the "May 27" coup of 1960 left-wing Kemalists propagated a socialist, neutralist and (in most cases) anti-pluralist vision of Kemalism" (355). Doğu Perinçek, the leader of the Workers' Party which was refounded in 1992, is a perfect example of the controversial and confusing structure of the leftist movement which propagated socialist and nationalist interpretations of Kemalism (370).

Via Özdamar's narrative it is already quite clear that the perception based on coloniality, nationalism, and secularism re-invented power relations by stigmatizing and othering identities, communities, and geographies. Thus, the coup that took place with a collaboration between the army and Atatürk's party, the CHP, like the previous one ended up with the hanging of three leftist students named Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin Alan and Yusuf Aslan. Today the Turkish Left recall Gezmiş and his comrades as celebrating Kemalism as progressive even after turning to Marxism-Leninism, and they emphasize their fight for national sovereignty (356). Nevertheless, "the fact that Gezmiş pleaded for a common struggle of the Turkish and the Kurdish people is, however, passed over due to the extreme hostility toward the Kurds" (Ibid.).

With regard to the nationalist and thus secular and modernist narrative possessed by many ideologies in Turkey, a famous actor named Haluk Bilginer tells in an interview how he was shocked when the initial outraged reactions towards the abolition of the Student Oath came from Turkish leftists (*Ot Dergisi* 2014). The Student Oath he refers to was an oath that had to be memorized and sung every morning before classes in primary schools until 2013. The oath is as follows:

> I am a Turk, honest and hardworking. My principle is to protect the younger to respect the elder, to love my homeland and my nation more than myself. My ideal is to rise, to progress.

> My existence shall be a gift to the Turkish existence. How happy is the one who says I am a Turk.

This very clearly reveals how nationalism is ingrained in almost all mainstream discourses in Turkey.

The student oath, the heroine's diasporic experiences both in Berlin and Turkey, especially south-eastern Turkey, and all the close readings regarding female sexuality and the body uncover the buried voices of those obscured identities. Thus, Özdamar concludes by writing:

> Asıldılar ('They have been hanged'.) A peasant, illiterate, held the newspaper the wrong way round, wept, his tears remained caught in his beard. A seagull flew into the ship and its head struck the ship's side. Many mothers walked silently, looking at the ground, across the Bridge of the Golden Horn. They did not say anything, but I heard their voices… City, be silent. Hear our song. We have long been living with the dead who have no grave. Look on our breasts, arms. We want our children living. Living they were taken away. Especially large men, an elite, on horses, have bent down to the alleys, gathered up our children from their horses. There our children still looked as if they gave the spring its colour. Rabies spat in the face of our branches, trees. Rabies does not anticipate the love of the mothers. (252-3)

As Lugones puts it, "Without knowing the other's "world," one does not know the other, and without knowing the other one is really alone in the other's presence because the other is only dimly present to one" (1987: 18). By travelling to other peoples' worlds, mainly women's, Özdamar presents a narrative that appears as a fictional response to the prominent Turkish feminist paradigm that either gives into discriminatory rhetoric or is just passive in recognizing another subjectivity and creating any coalition and solidarity.

5.9. Concluding Remark on *The Bridge*

Crossing bridges, boundaries, lands and traveling between worlds of gastarbeiters in Germany, and starving Kurdish peasants in Southeastern Turkey, the author unveils counter-memories and socio-political traumas mainly on the basis of female sexuality and body. By re-writing the Turkish and German official historiography essentially from a feminine perception, Özdamar employs symbolic and literal movements to decolonize the experiences of obscured and stigmatized, specifically female, colonial subjectivities.

Özdamar's palimpsest-like narrative reveals the darker side, namely the colonial and imperial, of socio-political and cultural transitions on the basis of the dislodgment of the colonial/modern gender system. Such a challenge encompasses the dominant

narratives related to migrant women and she attempts to give voice to various colonial subjectivities within both the rapidly expanding capitalist German socio-political structure and a Turkey which mimics the West and whose ambitious program of de-orientalization has resulted in the subalternization and stigmatization of particular identities and spheres (e.g. Kurds and peasants). Her traveling through the spheres of migrants in Germany and rural Anatolia's muddy peripheries overshadowed by a spatial and corporeal hierarchy imposed by a (trans)national system of colonial/imperial difference, which emerges as the "white Turk" discourse in Turkey, transpires through her mesmerizing narrative style. Contrary to the self-orientalizing prominent in the "white Turk" feminist framework, whose modernist, nationalist, and secular perceptions have ignored the presence of certain identities, in *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* these colonial figures appear in disturbing forms.

Chapter 6

Re-visiting Decolonial AestheSis and Exploring Decolonial Feminist Voice Lending Through Özdamar and Shafak's Literary Works

6.1. Introduction

> There is really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.
>
> Arundhati Roy
>
> True life, life at last clarified and brought to light, the only life, furthermore, that is fully lived, is literature.
>
> Marcel Proust

Clare Hemmings' question, "Why do stories matter?", in her work *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011) has been a primary motivational stimulus of this dissertation through which I have explored literature's contribution as a fictional response to the so-called "White Turk" feminist identity crisis. Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Özdamar's *Life is a Caravanserai* (1992) and *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (1998) have been discussed as notable novels that evoke this fictional response to the impasse of the mainly secular-modern Turkish feminist framework resulting from the invisible but substantially hegemonic logic of coloniality/modernity. This logic includes various vehicles such as secularism, modernism, progressivism, and also westernization. I also argued that, contrary to the coercive socio-political, ideological, and cultural structure of the social imaginary, these novels present us with a decolonial imaginary and thus pluriversality instead of Eurocentric, universalized, and so homogenized subjectivities, epistemologies, and cosmologies. So far I have used the concept of decolonial feminism to trace the invisible, marginalized, and silenced subjectivities, primarily those of women, of the Armenian and Turkish diaspora. Obscured figures of the working class, minorities, and religious mystics who have all been undervalued within grand narratives based on a Turkish version of Eurocentric modernity has resulted in self-colonization and/or self-orientalism. Thus, I have argued that all those figures have come forth and obtained visibility through the decolonial narratives of these transcultural writers. I have also argued that these novelists hold a significant position in putting forward counter-memories through their narratives, female

characters, and the historically crucial socio-political phenomena they touch upon in detail. Contrary to secular state policies, the Turkish feminist paradigm and even so-called feminist literary texts have disregarded and ignored the presence of certain identities which, however, appear in Shafak and Özdamar's novels.

Why, then, the need to re-visit decolonial aestheSis? In Chapter 3 I touched upon this notion as well as decolonial feminism by elucidating these authors' distinctive narratives, and so choice of language. A major objective of that chapter was to flesh out how these writers exhibited a manifesto-like narrative regarding their choice of language. Another fundamental goal was to look closely at the word and concept of aesthetics. I emphasized how the abstract universalism of Western-based epistemology based on modernity/coloniality has also framed the socio-political discourses (e.g. gender, race, civic nationalism, vernacular) and aesthetic perceptions of Turkish society, especially as a result of secularizton and modernization. I argued that this reform package displayed a reciprocal relationship with the Turkish feminist framework. The overwhelmingly authoritarian rhetoric of modernization implemented by the Kemalist ideology did not just engage in a reformation of socio-political and cultural structures, but all dynamics of Turkish society (e.g. architecture, literature, music) were impacted by this process of cutting ties with a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional, and multi-lingual anti-modern Ottoman past. Erdağ Göknar sets forth an illuminating portrayal of how literary texts implicitly applied the secular masterplot in order to induce the formation of the imagined Turkish female and male subjectivities:

> Novelists during the cultural revolution and afterward were charged with bringing about this epistemological and ontological transformation through a historically realist "literary modernity" that functioned to discursively separate religion and secularism into oppositional spheres. In other words, the masterplot advocated a Republican secularization thesis and the various tropes of the masterplot are present throughout Turkish literature. (2013: 26)

Therefore, the main point in Chapter 3 was to manifest a process from the colonial/modern aestheTics towards decolonial AestheSis with the contribution of the novels by both authors. What is more, I observed how the authors attempted to ressurect alleged anti-modern silenced languages (i.e. Arabic), aesthetic perceptions, and works of art such as oral tradition (i.e. sufi and religious tales) through fiction writing. Lastly, I

examined the border-dwelling positioning of these writers between national and transcultural literary contexts.

My main objective in this chapter in revisiting decolonial aestheSis is to delve into the question of why stories, or rather literature, matters with regard to the impasse experienced by the Turkish feminist framework. As Hemmings indicates, stories matter because they "intersect with wider institutionalizations of gendered meanings" (2011: 1). For her, telling stories about gender and feminism can lead to an interruption of narratives that make up dominant Western feminist stories (2). Indeed today we realize that story telling and so literature is deeply linked with power. On this, Nigerian feminist author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her TED Speech highlights that, "It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power" (2009). As she goes on to say:

> Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story. (Ibid.)

Thus, stories are built on a bilateral terrain which can be slippery and so deadly. On the other hand, it can be a fulcrum that provides a means of dislodging hegemonic narratives and power structures. Within this context, I explore decolonial aestheSis by discussing "decolonial voice lending", a phrase of Walter Mignolo, in combination with a close reading and so textual analysis of Shafak's *Bastard of Istanbul* and Özdamar's *The Bridge*. Besides giving voice to the obscured and stigmatized female figures by shifting the geo- and body-politics of knowledge, through their narratives these transcultural authors have elicited the significance of literature, cinema, and theatre, namely art. Thus, we need to re-visit decolonial aestheSis to manifest the interplay between fictional representation – that is, telling stories and so novel writing – and socio-political/ideological/cultural formations based on decolonial feminism.

While I mainly examine literary and political intersections and treat novels as spaces of identity formation, I also touch upon the prominent feature of the novels whose narrative contests colonial and imperial modulations like the rhetoric of modernity including secularism, civic nationalism (i.e. Turkism), and self-colonization. As Peruvian

writer and Nobel Prize-winner Mario Vargas Llosa argues, branches of the humanities — philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, and the arts — "[appear to] have succcumbed to the irresistible pressure of the cancerous division and subdivision of knowledge, isolating themselves in increasingly segmented and technical areas of expertise, whose ideas and terminology are beyond the scope of ordinary men and women" ("Why Literature?" 2001). Moreover, "literature offers sustenance to rebellious and non-conformist spirits" – that is, without literature, "the critical mind, which is an engine of political change and the best champion of liberty that we have, would go into irremediable decline" (Ibid.). The novel is thus the literary genre that can help the reader to ask radical questions, and as Vargas Llosa writes, "good literature is always — unintentionally — seditious and rebellious: a challenge" (Ibid.). Therefore, I will explore many of these aspects on the basis of the following question, "Why is it vital to write as a Middle Eastern, namely Turkish, female writer by possessing a decolonial feminist standpoint?". The answer revolves around the simple word "writing" which has the power to manifest a reversal.

We first need to flesh out the intersection between writing, namely literature, and (decolonial) feminist politics by starting with a re-thinking of Bakhtin's interpretation of the novel's power to shift positionings as articulated in his essay, "Discourse in the Novel", from *The Dialogic Imagination: Chronotope, Heteroglossia* (1981). For Bakhtin, the novel as a literary genre possesses the power to escape hierarchy and is built on the literary terrain of dialogism. He elaborates on the narrative techniques rooted in the genre such as double-voicedness, heteroglossia, and polyphony. Heteroglossia is a theory about different forms of languages working together or opposing each other within a single work, while polyphonic narrative refer to a many-voiced narration that has no one supreme author. Thereupon, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson argue in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (1990) that, "Bakhtin means to offer not just of techniques, but a fundamentally different approach to both language and literary discourse in their entirety" (20).

With the contribution of Shafak and Özdamar's literary works, I will analyse Bakhtin's perspective on the genre of the novel which he perceives as a revolutionary literary vehicle. Nevertheless, as Terry Eagleton (2007) writes in criticism of Bakhtin, it is somewhat surprising "that this once obscure Soviet philologist is now a star of the

postmodern West", and, as I will show, his views possess some significant flaws. Among his techniques of literary criticism it is necessary to dwell on Bakhtin's notion of the border chronotope which has been re-defined by Tlostanova in her essays "The Imperial-Colonial Chronotope" (2007) and "Transcultural Tricksters Beyond Times and Spaces: Decolonial Chronotopes and Border Selves" (2013). Though I will depart from Bakhtin's perception of the novel and its techniques, in particular the chronotope, my goal is to uncover how his study is limited and profoundly Eurocentric, having no interest in colonial/imperial relations and the modern/colonial gender system which has subsequently been adopted by the postmodern Western feminist framework that brings me to the notion of *écriture féminine* coined by French feminist Hélène Cixous.

Diane Price Herndl in *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic* (1991) writes that many French and American feminist theorists have linked the notion of the "dialogic" put forward by Bakhtin through his "novelist" discourse to the feminine logic, namely *écriture féminine*, found in women's novels (7). For instance, Soheila Ghaussy describes Özdamar's literary narrative as follows:

> Özdamar's conception of the female subject in time and place occurs through a particular angle of story-telling, which in Karawanserei highlights a "feminine language" through the tactic of embodying language, stressing the position of speaking as a woman, and emphasizing a narration which fuses the Turkish idiom with a mother tongue to create a hybrid and "creolized" language. These textual strategies powerfully interact with a nomadic displacement of fixed identity construction to further a "leaving and leaving behind of the fatherland" (the realm of a patriarchal imaginary) on the one hand, and to encourage feminist perspectives within conceptualizations of alterity on the other hand. (1999: 2)

She argues that the author advocates for *écriture féminine* to challenge hegemonic aspects associated with language as well as representation of identity (Ibid.). She also touches upon Rosi Braidotti's idea of "nomadic subjectivity" in terms of the articulation of a minority subjectivity (Ibid.). Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* also performs a similar narrative that can be taken as a feminine way of writing, as we have observed in Chapter 4.

As Ghaussy writes, "The effort to highlight an ethnically, culturally, and sexually differentiated perspective in "feminine writing" is often a deliberate feminist tactic used to empower the disenfranchised and often achieved through a consciously "embodied" text, that is, a text which acknowledges its own production through the body, as well as

the concrete materiality of words" (1999: 5). Though this can be perceived as manifesting the "politics of sexual difference" as Luce Irigaray identifyies it, and seems to display similarities with decolonial feminist thinker Maria Lugones' (1987) provocative standpoint on the recognition of difference and love between women, especially mothers and daughters, this interpretation is delusional. The difference Irigaray proposes is deeply problematic I will deconstruct her strategic essentialism once again on the basis of a decolonial feminist perception and decolonial aestheSis. In this chapter I aim to sever the linkage between Bakhtin's proposed literary techniques and *écriture féminine*, which will be followed with a close reading of the novels' narratives through the lenses of decolonial aestheSis and decolonial voice lending. With the contribution of *The Bridge* and *The Bastard of Istanbul* I will analyze how the authors and specific characters in their novels find a place in the world of art in general and aesthetics (i.e. literature, theatre, cinema and music) in particular.

6.2. The Bakhtinian Novel: Transmitter of Myriad Voices?

In his magnum opus *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) Mikhail Bakhtin argues that the novel as a literary genre possesses the power to escape hierarchy and is built on a literary terrain of dialogism which evokes subversion. In his essay entitled, "Discourse in the Novel", in which he covers developments of European and Russian novels, he argues that, "The novel begins by presuming a verbal and semantic decentering of the ideological world, a certain linguistic homelessness of literary consciousness, which no longer possesses a sacrosanct and unitary linguistic medium for containing ideological thought" (1981: 367). For him, the novel "is a consciousness manifesting itself in the midst of social languages that are surrounded by a single [national] language, and in the midst of [other] national languages that are surrounded by a single culture [Hellenistic, Christian, Protestant], or by a single cultural-politcal world (the Hellenistic kingdoms, the Roman Empire and so forth)" (Ibid.).

Additionally, with reference to Bakhtin's work Diane Price Herndl in *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic* (1991) writes that, "The novel is able resist hierarchy and achieve carnival laughter because of its "double-voicedness," its "dialogism." Ordinary language, Bakhtin argues, is always used in context; it always expects an answer. Meaning is created not through a single voice, but in the interaction of voices— that is,

in dialogue" (9). The "carnival laughter" is an allusion to Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1968), in which he analyzes French Renaissance writer François Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel.* He dwells on the characteristic of laughter and so the *carnivalesque* in Rabelais, which he explains as follows:

> The antique tradition has an essential meaning for the Renaissance, which offered an apology of the literary tradition of laughter and brought it into the sphere of humanist ideas. As to the aesthetic practice of Renaissance laughter, it is first of all determined by the traditions of the medieval culture of folk humor. However, in the condition of the Renaissance we do not see the direct continuation of these traditions; they enter a completely new and superior phase of existence. In the Middle Ages folk humor existed and developed outside the official sphere of high ideology and literature, but precisely because of its unofficial existence, it was marked by exceptional radicalism, freedom and ruthlessness. Having on the one hand forbidden laughter in every official sphere of life and ideology, the Middle Ages on the other hand bestowed exceptional privileges of license and lawlessness outside these spheres: in the market place, on feast days… (1968: 71)

For Herndl, "this association with the unofficial and resistance to authority means that the novel is able to participate in the"carnival" of laughter. This 'ambivalent laughter' is dialogic because it is 'at the same time cheerful and annihilating'. It is both festive and mocking; it is directed at everyone — those in power and those subjected to it" (1991: 9). Indeed, Bakhtin supports his argument by pointing to literary narrative techniques such as heteroglossia and polyphony. Heteroglossia is the theory of different forms of languages working together or opposing each other in a single work and evokes the interaction and conflict between characters' voices or between the narrator's voice and those of the characters (Ibid.). Thus, with heteroglossia, "multiple voices expressing multiple ideologies from different strata of language-in-use. This always leaves the novel speaking more than one language" (Ibid.). By contrast, polyphonic narrative means many-voiced narration that has no 'one' supreme author:

> Polyphonic writing relies neither on formulaic plotting nor on pure inspiration (both of which might be called "already over" before the act of composition begins), but on the identification and provocation of voices whose own potentials for surprising dialogue create the shape of the work. (Morson and Emerson 1990: 87)

Indeed, Nancy Glazener in her essay in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (1989) adopts a feminist viewpoint and writes that such literature "represents a struggle among socio-ideological languages unsettles the patriarchal myth that there could be a language of truth transcending relations of power and desire" (109-10). Thus, literary consciousness according to Bakhtin deploys resistance against any kind of power and it thereby possesses in itself the revolutionary strength to dislodge oppressions, discriminations, and

hardcore dominant narratives. He even argues that, "only the novel could come close to representing the 'open present', and real historicity" (Morson and Emerson 1990: 47).

Bakhtin's theory of literature privileges the novel over poetic genres, as to him the latter "were developing under the influence of the unifying, centralizing, centripetal forces of verbal-ideological life" (1981: 272). He argues that "the epic and poetry are "defined" genres which abide by rules; they are hierarchical, ahistorical, and canonical" (Herndl 1991: 8). As a result, the novel comes to the fore as the representative of alternative narratives and counter-memories by dismantling official historiographies. Thus, its fictional representations play the role of an oppostional agency confronting dominant discourses. Nevertheless, does Bakhtin's "novelist" discourse, in fact, stand against power structures? Are there any traces of a feminist perspective residing in the fight against power relations? What about novels that have given into colonial perceptions like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) or Charlotte Brontë's allegedly feminist but shot through with racial strategies *Jane Eyre* (1847)? Then, is the distinction between poetic genres and the novel so black and white? And a last question, are novels almost unexceptionally always multiple voiced, polyphonic, and a trap for hegemonic narratives?

Terry Eagleton in his review on Graham Pechey's *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Word in the World* (2007) writes that, "For the past three decades, Mikhail Bakhtin has been more of an industry than an individual" ("I Contain Multitudes" 2007). He continues with a satirical remark:

> The system cannot be overthrown, but at least it can be deconstructed. And since there is no political hope in the heartlands of capitalism, where the proletariat has upped sticks without leaving a forwarding address, the postmodern gaze turns mesmerically to the Other, whatever passport (woman, gay, ethnic minority) it happens to be travelling on. (Ibid.)

As Eagleton wryly remarks, there is almost no "hot postmodern topic that Bakhtin did not anticipate. Discourse, hybridity, otherness, sexuality, subversion, deviance, heterogeneity, popular culture, the body, the decentred self, the materiality of the sign, historicism, everyday life" (Ibid.). What is more, "the star of the postmodern West", as Eagleton identifies him, paradoxically, was a devout Russian Orthodox Christian rather than a Marxist as many critics enthusiastically assume. Still, I find it too harsh to underrate Bakhtin's perceptions on the literary consciousness and its power-shifting strategies which has the strong tendency to produce alternative narratives. However, one thing

which is certainly questionable about the Bakhtinian "novelist" discourse is the positioning of female sexuality and the body. In fact, it is not merely about finding the voice of the woman in Bakhtin, but also of the visibility of colonial and imperial subjectivities/differences. Let us recall the opening question of this chapter – are there really myriad voices in the Bakhtinian novel?

Interestingly, many American and French feminist critics have associated the Bakhtinian novelist language and the notions of "dialogics" with the idea of feminine language. Notable feminist critics such as Dale Bauer, Anne Herrman, Ann Jefferson, Nancy Glazener, and Patricia Yaeger have dealt with the Bakhtinian framework with regard to discourse based on gender/sexuality how and phallogocentricism violates the feminine voice and visibility. Carolina Núñez Puente in *Feminism and Dialogics: Charlotte Perkins, Meridel Le Sueur, Mikhail M. Bakhtin* (2006) reveals that in 1994 "feminist dialogics" was referred to by Lynne Pearce as a "new school of criticism" (quoted in Puente 2006: 11). While Pearce was the forerunner in identifying the school, she declared Dale M. Bauer its founder. Accordingly, Pearce summarizes the "feminist dialogics" by quoting Bauer and Jaret McKinstry from the introduction to *Feminism, Bakhtin and the Dialogic*:

> A way of thinking that 'challenges the assumption […] of a monolithic or universal feminism'[…] a way of living that 'overcomes the public-private split'[…] an epistemology which, like 'standpoint theory,' believes that context and positionality are all […] a new model of pedagogy which shows 'gender classes and races in dialogic rather than in opposition'[…] and most importantly, it is the latest […] form of feminist political resistance. (quoted in Puente 2006: 11)

This standpoint appears quite reasonable at first sight as a way of overcoming dominant narratives. However, manifesting the novelistic language as feminine would give into another binary logic: "If feminine language is novelistic, then the feminist critic can never speak outside a language which is defined by the masculine; the very idea of anything that is "feminist" is based squarely within the pallogocentric paradigm" (Herndl 1991: 17). Moreover, Bakhtin's novelist language has nothing to do with either the feminine or the feminine language and thus any feminist framework which, to some extent, legitimizes Terry Eagleton's sarcastic criticism.

Sue Vice in *Introducing Bakhtin* (1997) indicates that in *Rabelais* "women scarcely feature, except as mothers dying in childbirth, as old hags, as caricatures of

soothsayers—always as object(s) of comic ridicule" (178). Furthermore, with reference to Nancy Glazener, she "criticizes overly simple feminist appropriations of carnival which celebrate it, and femininity, for an inherent subversion; carnival offers only a temporary suspension of class and not patriarchy, and 'subversion never accomplishes a clean break or an unambiguous negation'" (Ibid.). Correspondingly, Nancy Glazener continues:

> Feminists have readily enlisted Bakhtin's writing for the project of replacing the patriarchal account of individualistic literary creation with a politicised account of the social production of literature. Bakhtin's own work is not markedly feminist: he wrote mainly about canonical male authors, flirted with auteur theories of literary creation, and was conspiciously silent about feminism and the social effect of gender difference. Nevertheless, his combination of linguistic theory, narratology and cultural analysis meshes appealingly with materialist and post-structuralist currents in contemporary literary studies, and it appears to be hospitable to the inclusion of gender as an additional, significant social and discursive category. (1989: 109)

It is true that this dialogic subversion implies anarchism and represents a subversive Other. However, such a subversion "which parts of Bakhtin's work and certain strains of feminist theory have endorsed is more mystifying than enlightening, and it tends to overshadow the analysis of particular strategies for ideological contention and subversion" (111). Glazener argues that contrary to the feminist interpretation of Bakhtin's dialogic subversion, the concept itself is not able to accomplish "a clean break or an unambiguous negation and cultural analysts, feminist and other, ought to avoid oversimplifying the process and effects of subversion without giving up substantive political critique." (Ibid.). Nonetheless, one cannot deny that the novel as a genre is a political vehicle that may work either in implementing or subverting ideologies, hegemonic official narratives, and so power structures. But to assume that the novel is the representative of feminine language and logic, i.e. a feminine dialogics based on Bakhtin's novelistic discourse, gives into the view that the feminine/female can only become a subject in a different stratum of society.

Thus, the "feminine language, then, is marked by process and change, by absence and shifting, by multi-voicedness. Meaning in feminine language is always "elsewhere," between voices or between discourses, marked by a mistrust of the "signified" (Herndl 1991: 11). This constant shift between voices and realms leading to a carnivalesque provides a mocking and festive reaction against any kind of authority and official power. Nevertheless, this most likely will result in a confusion with which the woman will

suspect if she uses her own language or the one ascribed to her by culture. As a result, Herndl writes of this complicated assumption that:

> The feminine writer must confront the question of whether speaking the language of the other is really her own language, or if it merely assuming her place in the pallogocentric paradigm. If we use Bakhtin's definition of dialogism, "another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way" (DI 324), we can see that feminine language could be described as "a woman speaking man's language, expressing her intentions, but in a refracted, masculine-defined way." Thus, what is valued by feminist criticism as "woman's language" is not woman's language at all, but women speaking as cultural stereotypes. The woman writing as a woman, then, gets her idea of what it is to write as a woman from a masculine definition, then, may help to understand what it would mean to the woman writing, and to the woman reading, to assume that cultural place. (1991: 16)

Still, it is necessary to repeat that one cannot ignore the fact that fiction has the power to transform socio-political, cultural, and linguistic discourses as I will show later with a close reading of Shafak and Özdamar's novels based on their specific characters and narratives, especially associated with different branches of art.

6.3. The Turnout: From Bakhtinian Novelist Discourse Towards Luce Irigaray, *Écriture Féminine* and Politics of Sexual Difference

It is first necessary to underline the assumed link between Bakhtin and Hélène Cixous' and other French feminists' notion of *écriture féminine*. According to Nancy Glazener, "feminists have readily enlisted Bakhtin's writing for the project of replacing the patriarchal account of individualistic literary creation with a politicised account of the social production of literature" (1989: 109). Though *écriture féminine*, a phrase coined by Cixous, seems to have close ties with Bakhtin's novelistic discourse and his views on subversive literary narrative and techniques, as Maroussia Hajdukowski Ahmed writes, "French feminista do not mention Bakhtin, until Kristeva, the main franco-phone 'feminist' transmitter of Bakhtinian theory, but when she speaks as a 'feminist', she does not mention Bakhtin" (1990: 153).

Today, as feminist scholar Toril Moi laments in her essay "I Am Not a Woman Writer" (2008), the question of women and writing (i.e. *écriture féminine*) has become a marginal topic in feminist theory (259). She links this to "the decline of interest in literature," which "is all the more striking given its central importance in the early years of feminist theory" (Ibid.). Furthermore, she assumes that "the loss of interest in literature is symptomatic of a more wide-ranging loss of interest in questions relating to women

and aesthetics and women and creativity within feminist theory" (Ibid.). Essentially, the loss of interest is a consequence of conflicts arising from contradictory feminist standpoints regarding feminine writing. There are those highlighting the significance of feminine difference in order to subvert phallogocentrism on the one hand, and on the other those who perceive such an emphasis on the feminine logic as a form of stereotyping. Referring to French writer Nathalie Sarraute, who is deeply critical of *écriture féminine*, Moi (2008: 266) writes:

> For writers who are women, it can be incredibly frustrating to be told that they have to write as a woman or like a woman. For what is this supposed to mean? That she has to conform to some stereotypical norm for feminine writing? This is surely what Sarraute thinks, and why she gets rather aggressive at the very thought of écriture féminine. On the other hand, it can be just as frustrating for a woman writer to feel that she has to write as a generic human being, since this opens up an alienating split between her gender and her humanity. This, I should point out, is the side of the dilemma that Sarraute never mentions. But even if a writer like Sarraute thrives on impersonality, it doesn't follow that every other woman writer feels the same way.

The latter frustration a woman can encounter as a writer – that is, the attempt to dismantle the phallogocentric authorship by challenging the "woman" and "man" categories and delinking these from the conventional and stereotypical categories of femininity and masculinity – is another reason for the loss of interest in feminine writing over the years. Indeed, this perspective permeated the rise of poststructuralism and works like Roland Barthes' (1977) essay "The Death of the Author". As Moi writes, "Equally influential was Jacques Derrida's (1988) systematic attempt to show that literary texts are just texts, that is to say a system of signs where meaning (signification) arises through the play of the signifiers, without any reference to a speaking subject, and Michel Foucault's (1977) radical anti-humanism" (2008: 262). But then, especially with Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), this perception intensified on the grounds of the feminist framework which challenge the category of woman and indicated "that we ought to speak about gender instead. Gender, moreover, was a performative effect of heterosexist and heteronormative power structures" (Ibid.).

Moi argues that this poststructuralist feminist paradigm cannot reach specific political and ethical conclusions through the course of such theories on how gender comes into being:

> Theories of origins simply don't tell us what we ought to do once gender has come into being. If I want to justify my view of women's situation in society, or on the rights of gays

> and lesbians, I can't do this simply by explaining how these phenomena have come into being. I need, rather, to set out my principles for just and equitable society, or for how people ought to treat one another, or explain why I think freedom is the highest personal and political value. (2008: 263)

Moi is critical of the shift away from literature and literary criticism and believes that feminist theorists should become more invested in discussing questions related to aesthetics. If we erase the "woman" category altogether, would that not obscure the experiences of certain female figures in the colonial/modern gender system whose stories we should read as women's stories? Despite the fact that the poststructuralist feminists are highly critical of universalizing/normalizing procedures and question the singularization of the identity, their intensely epistemic reflections remain too abstract to understand corporeal experiences. Audre Lorde in an interview emphasizes that:

> There's always someone asking you to underline one piece of yourself—whether it's Black, woman, mother, dyke, teacher, etc.—because that's the piece that they need to key in to. They want to dismiss everything else. But once you do that, then you've lost because then you become acquired or bought by that particular essence of yourself, and you've denied yourself all of the energy that it takes to keep all those others in jail. Only by learning to live in harmony with your contradictions can you keep it all afloat. (quoted in Hammond 2004: 31).

Taking this into account, I still nevertheless agree with Moi's take on feminine writing:

> In my view, if a woman's vision of the world is strongly marked by her gender, that is surely as potentially interesting as if it is not. The whole point, after all, is to avoid laying down requirements for what a woman's writing must be like. Every writer will have to find her own voice, and her own vision. Inevitably, a woman writer writes as a woman, not as a generic woman, but as the (highly specific and idiosyncratic) woman she is. (2008: 68)

Nevertheless, I doubt whether one can elaborate on the literary positioning of Turkish female writers such as Shafak and Özdamar's on the basis of *écriture féminine*.

When editor of *Meridians* Myriam J. A. Chancy interviewed Elif Shafak, she asked, "Do you think, as Cixous suggested some time ago, that there is such a thing as an *écriture feminine* or that there is a 'woman's language'?", to which Shafak replied, "I do think there are women's languages but not a woman's language—not a monolithic discursive practice equally related to by women of all colors or classes" (2003). In the same vein, by analyzing Luce Irigaray's feminist standpoint based on the politics of sexual difference, I will argue that, in fact, the pitfalls of *écriture féminine* lie in the

singularity and homogeneity of the phrase "*a* woman's language". The romanticization of the theoretical concept *écriture féminine* can lead to the duplication of hegemonic positions with regard to patriarchal, colonial, and imperialistic discourses.

Thinking through the politics of sexual differences Irigaray proposes, one sees that women are failed by phallogocentric linguistic, cultural, political institutions. Irigaray thus argues that the civil domain, the territory in which women's bodies, space, nature and representations are imagined, is appropriated by men. Irigaray in her work entitled *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution* (1994) hints at the primary vehicle of patriarchy, namely language that produces power structures. Further on she terms language as that which "also serves to establish forms of social mediation, ranging from inter-personal relationships to the most elaborate political relations. If language does not give both sexes equivalent opportunities to speak and increase their self-esteem, it functions as a means of enabling one sex to subjugate to other" (Irigaray 1994: xv). Thus, as Mary S. Pollock writes, she suggests women should "create not merely a room of their own, not merely genres and accents of their own, but also languages of their own" (1993: 234). In this way, women obtain freedom from the patriachal language that imprisons women within conventional, stereotypical, and singularized identities.

Hilary Robinson in *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray: The Politics of Art by Women* (2006) writes that a key notion Irigaray employs is "mimesis" which is crucial in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977), *Speculum: Of the Other Woman* (1974), and *Je, Tu, Nous* (1990). To include the 'woman' in the literary canon the mimetic practice provides her the tools of a "hysteric's strategy", as Robinson calls it, which implies an "isolated individual rather than a collectively political (feminist)" (2006: 42). Quoting Rosi Braidotti, Robinson portrays the mimetic practice in a more lucid way:

> [It] amounts to a collective repossession by women of the images and representations of 'Woman' as they have been coded in language, culture, science, knowledge, and discourse and consequently internalized in the heart, mind, body, and lived experience of women. Mimetic repetition as a textual and political strategy is the active subversion of established modes of the representation and expression of women's experience. In this respect the redefinition of the subject Woman/women as both representation and experience amounts to no less than a change of civilization, of genealogy, of sense of history. Feminist counter genealogies are the inroads to a new symbolic system by women. (quoted in Robinson 2006: 62)

Thus, using male theories like those of Freud and Lacan against men, Irigaray strives to uncover the buried female subject and manifest a female imaginary which is fluid, changeable, and rebellious against logic. When it comes to her feminine language, there is in fact more than one language and the feminine language resides on the boundary, always ready to overthrow hierarchies: "It is absence-silence-madness present-speaking-sane. It proves the hierarchies mistaken. Like the voices Bakhtin hears in the novel's carnival, the female voice laughs in the face of authority" (Herndl 1991: 11).

In this context, Irigaray's politics of sexual difference which are deeply associated with the mimetic practice, expects us to consider a cultural change on the grounds of civil identity but then on two levels:

> First, the level that requires both a long-term perspective and an immediate response: changing the forms of symbolic mediation. This means, for example, changing not only the rules of speech and language that give preference to the so-called neuter masculine (the human gerenic called 'man', the use of the masculine plural when speaking of both sexes, etc.), but also the habitual use of images that tend to portray men as respectable citizens, as civil and religious authority figures, and consider women to be sexual property at the disposal of men. Thus, in advertisements, the man will be wearing a tie while the woman will be partially naked. Though extreme, my example occurse frequently. Changing these habits is a long process, because it means changing attitudes, changing th cultural climate, stereotypes and customs, and so on. (1994: xvi)

Accordingly, in *Democracy Begins Between Two* (2001) she comes to the fore with a criticism of neutralizing the difference which will serve any other purpose than a loss of human identity (54). She assumes this neutralization of civil identity in terms of difference is a way to obscure and erase race, sex, generation, and age. She thus continues, arguing that, "In fact, forcing races, sexes and generations to conform to a single model of identity, culture and civilzation means subjecting them to an order which does not respect their differences. One could then speak of a new way of colonizing, of evangelizing, of imposing the guardianship of a wealthy patriach, not only on the level of money but also of civilization" (Ibid.). Thus, as a whole, *écriture féminine* and the feminine logic built on the politics of sexual difference proposed by Irigaray and subsequently employed by many Western feminist theorists possesses a positioning which is based on the perception that, "If we keep on speaking the same language together, we are going to reproduce the same history" (1985: 205).

Though Irigaray's feminist standpoint appears to consider racial, sexual, cultural, class differences on equal terms, a further reading will prove her Eurocentric perspective

that somewhat gives into another dichotomous logic. It becomes evident with *The Age of the Breath,* a chapter included in *Luce Irigaray: Key Writings* (2004), that an ontological essentialism is one of the main aspects of Irigaray's sexual difference paradigm. Through her work she "amplifies her basic reformative model of sexual difference and its spiritualisation, postulating that women are not only spiritual initiators but mediators between the different religious traditions, as for them 'neither dogmas nor rights, and even representations are (not necessary) to approach the divine'" (Joy 2006: 136). This ontological essentialism, as Rosi Braidotti discusses, "asserts that women's way of being (as becoming) has definite properties that distinguish them from men, and render them more receptive to the natural world and eastern religions" (Ibid.). Consistently, in *Between East and West* (2002) she affirms that a woman who is 'faithful to herself' is close to Eastern cultures, close to the Buddha, and, moreover, venerates the feminine spiritual (Ibid.). It is this metaphysical essentialism that will cause a u-turn and bring women back to her conventional role in the patriarchal discourse. As Morny Joy writes:

> Irigaray has invested her creative energy in repudiating the Freudian and Lacanian prescriptions for women, and in subsequently substituting her own… As a result of Irigaray's imaginative rewriting of Freud's script, sexual difference becomes reified in a way that privileges women and their 'feminine' spirituality and identifies them with affirmative ontological ideals. In such a construct, a form of natural law which asserts that whatever is in existence, i.e. sexual difference, is natural, and therefore right, is all too apparent. At the same time, a form of the naturalistic fallacy which views the female being as inherently good is promoted. Both these assumptions coincided in a fascinating, if eclectic mixture. Irigaray fails to realise that, in restricting women to their rightful place in the cosmic order, she endows them with somewhat dubious mythical legacy and also issues proclamation as to their appopriate behaviour. She does not seem to realise that, in doing this, she risks being just as categorical as the traditional religions she contests. (2006: 140)

What is more, Irigaray's strategic essentialism is also strongly criticized by Judith Butler who argues that Irigaray emphasizes "the primacy of sexual difference over other forms of difference — race, class, sexual orientation, etc." (quoted in Goulimari 2015). For Butler this feature of Irigaray's feminist standpoint cannot be neglected, continuing that, "Irigaray's insistence on the primacy of sexual difference is an implicitly white, middle-class, heterosexual position focusing on the marginalization of women qua women, but inattentive to other forms of social marginalization" (Ibid.). Thus, the female subject in Irigaray's textual and sexual strategies possesses explicit similarities with Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque figures and their subversive role in overthrowing hierarchy. Nevertheless, this appeal to romanticize the marginality of female and carnivalesque

figures, as I have argued formerly, are temporary subversions that do not thoroughly endanger the dominant discourse.

Accordingly, Hwa Yol Jung states that it would have been an incomplete ambitious and anti-modernist project if Irigaray did not elaborate on “the constructing of a new ontology, a new ethics, and a new politics in the age of multiculturalism and globalization if it leaves out the question of how philosophy is done in the non-Western world” (2012: 59-60). Therefore, Jung argues, she would find it necessary to develop “an intercontinental connection between her carnal feminism and the East, and she is deeply drawn to the transversal or cross-cultural allience with the East, with the tangible thought and practiceof India” (60). To expand her philosophical horizons, Irigaray would venture with her “model of the two” paradigm based on sexual difference to a dialogue between the East and West (Ibid.). However, this way of thinking once again gives into another binary that promotes a connection between the female figure and the spiritual East, which leads to the re-emergence of an orientalist, Eurocentric, dichotmous, phallogocentric logic.

Despite how Irigaray’s emphasis on difference and the loving perception (i.e. the loving gaze) appears to have close links with Maria Lugones, it is, in fact, a mistake to pair them. Unlike Irigaray, Lugones argues that we need to focus neither on sameness nor on "difference", as such difference is mainly structured on the logic of oppression. Instead, she looks to “non-dominant differences” (1987: 84). She defines her understanding of difference on the basis of the coloniality of gender:

> Unlike colonization, the coloniality of gender is still with us; it is what lies at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world power system. Thinking about the coloniality of gender enables us to think of historical beings only one-sidedly, understood as oppressed. As there are no such beings as colonized women, I suggest that we focus on the beings who resist the coloniality of gender from the “colonial difference”. (2010: 746)

In her essay “The Coloniality of Gender” (2008) Lugones informs the reader that, “as Eurocentered, global capitalism was constituted through colonization, gender differentials were introduced where there were none” (7). She refers to the Yoruba society whom Oyeronke Oyewumi portrays as a community that was exposed to an oppresive gender system due to colonial power structures (Ibid.). Thus, by starting with the difference between men and women Irigaray has already fallen into the universalized

gendering perception mainly imposed by dominant Eurocentric colonial/modern narratives.

Both feminists deal with love, but on different terms. In *I Love To You* (1996) Irigaray grounds her argument primarily in the love between man and woman. This love is contructed on the loving gaze, as Kelly Oliver touches upon in *Returning to Irigaray* (2007), and brings men and women together through their "difference by virtue of both embodiment and transcendence" (129). By contrast, in "Playfulness, "World"-Travelling, and Loving Perception" (1987) Lugones starts by strongly emphasizing cross-cultural, cross-racial, and kinship love between women. For her, this should be practiced by affirming "plurality in and among women as central to feminist ontology and epistemology. Love is seen not as fusion and erasure of difference but as incompatible with them. Love reveals plurality. Unity ―not to be confused with solidarity― is undersood as conceptually tied to domination" (3). All in all, neither in Bakhtin's feminist interpretations which are the basis of feminine dialogics nor in Irigaray's *écriture féminine* can we really read the woman who is exposed to the colonial/modern gender system which Lugones describes. The vital question is, therefore, whether we can find the Middle Eastern Turkish female figures in the feminine dialogics of Bakthin or in the *écriture féminine* and the female logic grounded on difference of Irigaray?

Lamia Ben Youssef Zayzafoon in *The Production of the Muslim Woman: Negotiating Text, History, and Ideology* (2005) argues that French feminists like Simone de Beauvoir have portrayed the "Muslim woman" as a monolithic category that functions as a metonomy for Islam's inferiority (76). When it comes to Irigaray she refers to her "Veiled Lips" in which the scholar employs the Persephone myth to question "the woman's position in a system of representation of which depends on the repression of her difference" (Ibid.). The veil here stands for the hymen, the bride, virginity and "for the absence and burial of women's "magic" in language" (Ibid.). Zayzafoon quotes Irigaray declaring that, "In a man's language, woman is always the "veil," "the sheath," or "the envelope" that assis (s) him (and) support(s) him" (Ibid.). Thus, to Irigaray the veil symbolizes "not only of women's oppression by patriarchy, but also of their alienation from the maternal" (Ibid.). Zayzafoon hints at the interesting aspects of Irigaray who never mentions any Muslim women in her work, but has influenced Muslim female writers like Assia Djebar: "How can the veiled "Muslim woman" speak or be read in a

system of representation where the veil — the sign of her cultural difference — is 'synonymous with rape, ravishment, theft, and death?'" (Ibid.). The Muslim female figure in Irigaray's theoretical realm is silent and so a submissive slave. With reference to the veil again, Zayzafoon writes:

> Reversing Freud's metaphor, Irigaray writes that women veil themselves not because they are hiding the "deficiency of (their) genitals, " but in order to compete in a capitalistic economy controlled by men. Here, the veil does not hide women's lack, but enable the commodification of the woman's body over which Fanon remains silent, Irigaray leaves out all differences between women and reproduces the universalist claim in Western feminism that all women are oppressed regardless of their differences of class, race, and sexual orientation. (77)

Zayzafoon states that realizing all these features of Irigaray, Assia Djebar deploys a strategic shift in her writings from using French feminist aesthetics (*écriture féminine*) to Islamic feminist versions (Ibid.). If the veil represents rape, submission, and silence then it is not really possible and reasonable for me to read Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* and Özdamar's *The Bridge* and *Life is a Caravanserai* through *écriture féminine*, although literary critics like Soheila Ghaussy would do precisely this. It is the pious and veiled Banu, the clairvoyant sister of Zeliha, who poisons and takes revenge on their own brother who had raped Zeliha. As I have elucidated, Banu is portrayed by Shafak as the enunciator of the victims of the Armenian Diaspora, that is, she is drawn as the prominent female figure to unearth the Armenian exodus which becomes a taboo history of the Turkish nation-building politics which developed later. On the other hand, in Özdamar's *Life is a Caravanserai* we encounter the powerful 'veiled' Anatolian grandma of the protagonist who comes to the fore as the primary figure who, in a way, moulded the future socialist identity of the little girl. Thus, by performing a close reading along the lines of *écriture féminine* and Irigaray's politics of sexual difference would have constrained the various female figures in the novels in a re-defined binary logic.

So far we have seen how the Eurocentricism and phallogocentrism of both Bakhtin's novelistic discourse and dialogics and also of *écriture féminine* violate the subjectivity of the Middle Eastern (i.e. Turkish) female figure. Still, this brings us back to Bakhtin's vision that identifies the novel as a revolutionary literary vehicle which can shift the position of power structures. Producing alternative narratives demands the stories written by these authors, who to some extent do not give into self-colonization, but then often present counter-memories of the silenced and obscured female characters locked up

in the universalized colonial/modern gender system. In conclusion, literary critics like Soheila Ghaussy elaborate on texts like that of Özdamar and Shafak's as texts that employ feminine writing and thus steal words from the patriarchally dominated language of hegemonic discourses (1999: 5). However, they forget that these Turkish writers, as John Berger writes in his foreword to Özdamar, succesfully change voices, for instance talking about sex like man ("and what is between its legs changes too"; 2007: x). To quote Elif Shafak as a last word on this part of the chapter in which she problematizes how she is pushed into a category as a Turkish female author within the context of the literary canon:

> And I am worried because the conditions of the age of military machine force artists to make a choice between the Muse and being political, as if these two things cannot coexist. Therefore, categories like African American art, Native American art, Latin American art or Feminist art can become one-dimensional. They dehumanize the artists by negating their individuality. Even when they look liberating, categories slyly damage the work produced and restrict the artist herself. In the U.S.A. there is a persistent tendency to pigeonhole artists, especially those from non-Western worlds or minorities. If you are not a white, heterosexual woman, then immediately they formulate categories to put your work into, such as Chicana literature, lesbian fiction, Third World fiction, etc. ("Migrations" 2003)

This is exactly what both Özdamar and Shafak experience through their fiction writing career. In the next part, I will examine how fiction can be politicized, provincialized, and become a tool of both hegemonic narratives and also a panacea for reversals and a prominent vehicle for producing alternative narratives.

6.4. The Politics of Shafak and Özdamar's Fiction: Decolonial AestheSis and Decolonial Voice Lending

In 2008, in a lecture entitled "De schrijver als Pendelaar" (The Writer As a Commuter) at the Winternachten The Hague International Literature Festival, Elif Shafak laid bare the obstacles to a female novelist with a Middle Eastern Muslim background:

> Unfortunately today there is a growing expectation in this vein. This expectation works against non-Western authors more than any others. Let's say, if you are a 'woman novelist from the Muslim world', like me, then you are expected to write the stories of 'Muslim women'. This means writing about 'the problems of women under Islam'. This is what publishers want to buy and promote. This is what people want to read and tell. 'If you are an Algerian woman writer, write about women in Algeria' they say. Today's literary world has begun to attribute a function to fiction. People want to read books that they believe will help them to 'learn about the Other'. This is not an innocent expectation. It confines the role of the writer to a single identity. In my books I have written extensively about hermaphrodites, Jewish conversos, heterodox dervishes, mystics of every religion, shamans, transvestites, ethnic minorities, subcultures of Istanbul, religious minorities, immigrants, suicidal artists etcetera… Once I wrote about the love of a very fat woman and a dwarf in Istanbul. At the first glance none of these people was me. It was not my 'identity'.

> But my point is I do not have to be these characters in order to have them in my novels. It is a mistake to expect a Black writer to solely write about blacks or an African writer to solely write about Africa. Can't a woman Turkish writer write about a Chinese immigrant in the UK or a Norwegian gay professor in Oslo? Why not?

In a similar vein, when Özdamar's first novel won the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize, she was equated with the story teller Scheherazade in the Arabian Nights and thus orientalized and reduced to the oppressed Persian virgin of King Shahryar (Konuk 2007: 233). Her achievement and the literary critical reception revealed ingrained orientalist biases within the European literary canon. Like Shafak, Özdamar was quite aware, saying, "I was accepted, but merely as a 'guest-writer" (quoted in Jankowsky 1997: 261). On this, Kader Konuk underlines that towards the end of the 1990s the reception of Özdamar's writings shifted to a more politically engaged approach (Ibid.). However, as Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez state, even today a provincialized (i.e. Western) modern aesthetics colonizes our senses and induces the rejection or homogenization of other forms of aesthetics (*Decolonial AestheSis* 2013). Therefore, it is crucial that female authors like Shafak and Özdamar from a Turkish and Muslim background 'write back' to the Eurocentric literary canon by neglecting the modern aesthetics that categorizes or disregards other forms as Mignolo argues. In *Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms* (2014) Lugones writes that a resistance based on aesthetics and art is required to dismantle the zero point epistemology that imposes the logic of appropriating and discrediting other knowledges and different form of "aestheSis":

> Those resistant understandings have cultural significance in music, art, theory. Resistance is in part constituted by different knowledges. Monoculturalism and monolingualism express the Eurocentrism that has accompanied the history of Western colonialism. Colonial power has attempted to either appropriate or erase all knowledges it encountered. Eurocentric discourse has projected "a linear historical trajectory leading from the Middle East and Mesopotamia to classical Greece (constructed as 'pure,' 'western,' and 'democratic,') to Imperial Rome and then to the metropolitan capitals of Europe and the United States." (Shohat and Stam, 297) That historical line erased not only the cultures, knowledges, memories, and ways of those outside of it. It also erased the knowledges produced in resistance to its imposition through conquest, colonization, and enslavement. Those resistant knowledges, cultures, and histories have countered Eurocentric knowledge, including the Eurocentric understanding of the colonized. It has resisted colonial oppression, including the racialization of labor, gender, and sexuality. (77)

The monolinguism Lugones hints at seems to contradict Shafak and Özdamar's language choices. Can we therefore say that these Turkish female authors surrender to a Western-based understanding of aesthetics and subjectivity?

It is necessary to underline Turkey's ambiguity in terms of its cultural and socio-political/ideological positioning between 'East' and 'West'. Turkish national identity today is quite at odds with its Ottoman and thus Eastern legacy. In Chapter 3 I discussed how Turkish aesthetics gave into a Western-based modern aesthetics implemented by governmental force. The Turkification of various identities, cultures, and languages took a very similar course to that of Western colonization. I call this the Turkish ethnic renaissance in which literature played an enormous role in its nation/culture-building process and also in the course of modernization/Westernization. Therefore, Shafak and Özdamar's use of English and German mean stepping into the decolonial terrain – that is, the decolonial aestheSis which enables them the position of being neither here nor there. Actually, this cannot be identified with ambiguity, rather it is a locus where wounds resulting from the modern/colonial forms of oppression await healing. By grounding their works on notions like the Turkish and Armenian diaspora, giving voice to silenced and stigmatized female figures such as working class, spiritual, religious, and minority women by performing a counter-memory, these female authors write from the wounds. This way of writing is termed "decolonial voice lending" within the decolonial framework.

Through an interview with Rod Sachs, Walter Mignolo states that decoloniality intersects with the acts of decolonial voice lending. This process starts initially by realizing the fact that we are all linked to the colonial matrix of power in which knowledge, culture, and aesthetic perceptions are all provincialized. It continues with the unearthing of delegitimized knowledges and subjectivities, since performing on behalf of another is a form of decolonial voice lending (Mignolo 2011). Accordingly, I will now continue by exploring such questions as: How has fiction been politicized and became a tool of hegemonic narratives? How do Shafak and Özdamar view the novel genre as compared to Bakhtin's novelist discourse? And how are we going to read their novels when compared to Chinese contemporary artist and activist Ai Weiwei's famous phrase, "Everything is art. Everything is politics" within the context of decolonial aestheSis and decolonial voice lending?

Firstly, to start with Shafak's novel, it is important to recall that *The Bastard of Istanbul* resulted in the author's prosecution in 2007. Tragicomically, "a nationalist lawyer called Kemal Kerinçsiz filed a complaint in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district against

Shafak" because of the remarks on the Armenian deportations and diaspora made by a "fictional" character in the novel (Richard Lea, *The Guardian*, 24/4/2006). In her interview with Myriam J. A. Chancy for the feminist journal *Meridians* Shafak discusses the underlying reasons why her novel was attacked so severely by nationalists. She associates this with a belated modernity in which novels especially "became the primary site in which the definition of 'us' was constructed and the boundary between 'us' and 'them' retained... Literature, in general, and novels, in particular, promoted the collective internalization of public norms, con-ventions, and symbols. Literature had a privileged position in the Enlightenment project of culture-building. As such, it was the first art to evolve into an autonomous institution bearing both symbolic and economic value" (2003). She continues by stating that this mission was applied to authors in the last years of the Ottoman Empire and deepened with the advent of the Republic:

> I should note that most of the writers of that time were people working within and for the state apparatus. They wanted to reform the basic social structures but never truly, radically, to transform it. This created a tradition of writing in which the writer placed himself above his readers, a hidden hierarchy between writer and reader. Women writers too wrote in a similar way. One of the leading women novelists of the following period, Halide Edip Adivar, wrote with a similar mission, to educate the masses. In her novels, that is why there are more stereotypes than there are characters. (Ibid.)

Thus, as Shafak claims, fiction in Turkey became the locus of struggle for freedom: "For ages and ages fiction enabled Turkish writers and poets to express things they could not express otherwise" (Ibid.).

In *The Bastard of Istanbul* Shafak elaborates on all of these aspects of literature in relation to two Armenian characters: Hovhannes Stamboulian and his granddaughter Armanoush Tchakhmakhchian. Shafak portrays Hovhannes as follows:

> Hovhannes Stamboulian, a renowned poet and and columnist, was secretly writing a book entirely outside his main field. He could be rejected, ridiculed, or reviled at the end. At a time when the entire Ottoman Empire was sated with grandiose undertakings, revolutionary movements, and nationalist divisions, at a time when the Armenian community was pregnant with innovative ideologies and ardent debates, he in the privacy of his house was writing a children's book. (226)

Stamboulian's idea of writing a children's book in Armenian would have been the first book ever written for children in the Armenian minority, "Was it because the Armenian minority had become a society unable to consider its children as children? Was childhood a futility, if not a luxury denied to a minority in need of growing up quickly as it could?"

(Ibid.). His aim was to collect Armenian folktales, "most of which had been transmitted from generation to generation, others long forgotten. Throughout the book he remained loyal to the authenticity of each tale, hardly changing a word. But now he planned to end the book with a story of his own" (Ibid.). Nevertheless, in the last years of the Ottoman Empire nationalist perceptions were gaining ground and a witchhunt was started against the Armenians especially.

In 1915 the nationalist Young Turks, who according to Şerif Mardin were influential on the builders of the Turkish Republic, prepared a death list of Armenians, writers, poets, artists, and intellectuals at the top (2006: 164). The late Ottoman government initially decided to get rid of "'the brains' and only then proceeded to eradicate the rest – the layer people" (2006: 96). As a result, one night Stamboulian is visited by a sergeant and accused of conspiring with the Armenian insurgents of the time: "They read your poems and then rebel against the Ottoman Sultanate" (237). Thus, Stamboulian, like 234 other members of the intellectual and professional elite, were taken from their homes and never came back (161). The early Turkish nationalists of the time intentionally targeted such individuals among the non-Muslim minorities of the Ottoman era because they held important positions from education to economics. As a result, exterminating them meant to cripple their presence after the proclamation of the Turkish nation-state which was built on a single identity. Though their numbers decreased dramatically their professional power was still perceived as a problem, and so "[it was] solved by forbidding them from employment in the civil and military services" (Örs and Komşuoğlu 2007: 410).

Still today, Turkey's Armenians are the largest non-Muslim minority group in the country. It is estimated that "before World War I one in every five people in Turkey was not Muslim, and after the war this ratio decreased to one in 40.8" (407). Under the Ottoman Empire, identity "was created by an exclusionary process, based not on ethnicity but religion" (406). Nevertheless, restrictions were imposed on communities like the Armenians and the Jews, for instance they were forced to live in certain neighbourhoods (Ibid.). Later, the founding fathers of the Turkish Republic, under the influence of the Turkist approaches of late Ottoman intellectuals, chose to construct a Turkish nation which unites all Muslim groups, but then with secular ideals which remove the Ottoman Empire's emphasis on religion and replaces it with ethnic identity (409).

Mustafa Kemal's threatening military campaign that aimed at nationalization and homogenization cut short and obscured the presence of the already ostracised Armenian community in the early years of the Republic. For instance, for decades the Turkish nation's iconic female image was Sabiha Gökçen who was the first female combat pilot and was portrayed as a modernized, emancipated, and westernized role model Turkish woman. Her position was that of a Turkish woman whose main objective was to break free from the Ottoman past. Nevertheless, if we delve into her story we encounter a dark truth about the Armenian community's assimilation due to the Turkification strategies. In 2004 Hrant Dink, an Armenian-Turkish journalist, published evidence of Gökçen's real identity as an Armenian girl named Hatun Sebilciyan who was orphaned as a result of the genocide conducted in 1915. Accordingly, Raffi Bedrosyan writes, "In stark contrast, the war hero and pilot Sabiha Gokcen was in fact an Armenian girl from Bursa, adopted by Ataturk after being orphaned during the genocide" (2011). Publishing this story cost Hrant Dink his life when he was assasinated by an ultra-nationalist in 2007. Dink was already in the spotlight when he came forward as an Armenian public figure who courageously declined to call himself a Turk and told a conference in Urfa in 2002 that he was not a Turk, "but an Armenian of Turkey" (Freely 2007: 16). Right after his speech he was prosecuted for insulting Turkishness (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, the real tragedy of the story relates to the literature which is analyzed by Rubina Peroomian in *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature* (2008). She argues that, "As a result of the prevailing atmosphere of fear and political pressures in the ensuing Republican era, the cultural life of the minorities, Armenians for that matter, was dead" (2). Therefore, it is not surprising that throughout *The Bastard of Istanbul* Shafak constantly seems to build up a counter-memory of Armenian and Turkish subjectivities which have had to sustain systematic violence from the state as a result of nationalism, modernization, and secularism. Peroomian decribes how the Kemalist state enacted its Turkification project:

> In order to block the transmission of historical memory, the government had banned the teaching of Armenian history and geography in Armenian schools. Likewise, the mention of Armenians and their past experience, the existence of Armenians all together, and the Armenian issue in Turkey was banned in Turkish media, in schools, in textbooks, in literature. A generation of Turkish citizens was growing up ignorant of their past, ignorant of the Armenian presence and cultural input in the pre-Republican era. (Ibid.)

Unsurprisingly, Ömer Türkes attests that, "among 5000 novels published in the Republican Turkey, only a dozen mentions the Armenians and their deportation, and almost all follow the official line of the interpretation of the events" (quoted in Peroomian 2012: 2). In light of these restrictions and censorship policies, "Turkish-Armenian literati walked a tightrope, always cautious not to cross the line. And so, writers stayed away from the theme of their nation's collective suffering of the past" (3). Strikingly, in the 1970s the literature denying past wrongdoings took an even more poignant turn and an outpouring of such denials found its way into both popular and formal education: "A generation of Turks grew up indoctrinated to hate Armenians as traitors, liars, rebels, and conspirators who allied with the enemies of Turkey to topple the Empire" (5). In the words of the ostracised Armenian poet Hovhannes Stamboulian's granddaughter Armanoush in *The Bastard of Istanbul*:

> She, as an Armenian embodied the spirits of her people generations and generations earlier, whereas the average Turk had no such notion of continuity with his or her ancestors. The Armenians and the Turks lived in different time frames. For the Armenians, time was a cycle in which the past incarnated in the present and the present birthed the future. For the Turks, time was a multihyphenated line, where the past ended at some definite point and the present started anew from scratch, and there was nothing but rupture in between. (165)

Besides uncovering the drastic consequences for the Armenian diaspora, specifically regarding its cultural memory and the literary context of Hovhannes Stamboulian's case, Shafak also pays tribute to Zabel Yessaian, "the only woman novelist that Young Turks put on their death list in 1915" (*BI* 112). Armanoush Tchakhmakhchian, granddaughter of Hovhannes Stamboulian, thus comes to the fore with the nickname "Madame-My-Exiled- Soul" (referencing Zabel Yessaian) when she logs into a computer at the cybercafe Cafe Constantinopolis. The section she enters is a chatroom whose members are the grandchildren of Greek and Armenian families who were once based in Istanbul.

That Shafak links Armanoush to Zabel Yessaian is surely intentional. Yessaian was a fascinating personality. Born in Constantinople, she lived much of her life in exile. She had enjoyed a tumultuous life as a novelist and columnist (*BI* 113). In an article, Shafak herself describes Yessaian as a woman who obtained her education at the Sorbonne in philosophy and literature and after her studies returned to Istanbul in 1903 (2006: 25). Instead of becoming a teacher, as was expected of women, Zabel decided to do something unusual: "She would become a novelist and essayist and earn her living by

the pen" (Ibid.). She would be warned against her dream of becoming a novelist even by an older Armenian woman writer, Serpuhi Dussap, who told her that the Armenian community was not ready for a woman pursuing *a room of her own*. Especially after witnessing the 1909 Adana massacres, she would realize the significance of writing about the Armenians' collective suffering during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Her novel *Among the Ruins* was written as "a testament to collective grief and a struggle against collective amnesia" (Ibid.). With regard to her novel she emphasized that she did not write "only for Armenian readers but also Turkish readers who had no idea about what was going on" (Ibid.). All these would lead her to a nightmare and he being placed on the Young Turks' death list. Shafak relates the rest of the story:

> She managed to escape arrest, and then deportation. For a while she hid inside hospitals; then she ran away to Tbilisi, Georgia; from there to Paris; and finally to Baku, Azerbaijan. Once outside Ottoman territory, she took up her pen in the service of memory and started collecting the testimonies of survivors, trying to ensure that future generations would not forget the calamity that had befallen them. She was not a novelist after her own imagination anymore but a record keeper. Still, being the critical-minded intellectual that she was, it wouldn't take her very long to be regarded as dangerous by the Soviet authorities. Born in Istanbul, always in exile, Zabel Esayan died in Stalin's Siberia in 1943. (Ibid.)

In Shafak's novel the primary Armenian figure dwelling in the world of literature is Armanoush, a complete "bibliophile" (*BI* 2006: 96). Nevertheless, the Tchakhmakhchian family are very disturbed by this. Armanoush knows that her family's resistance to her passion for books comes from a deep and dark source: "It was not only because she was a woman but also because she was an Armenian that she was expected to refrain twice as much from becoming a bibliophile" (Ibid.). This is about "a fear of survival", the instinctive collective urge to protect her from shining too bright, as writers, poets, artists, and so on were the first to be eliminated by the Late Ottoman government. Interestingly, this traumatic memory is never at ease: "Like too many Armenian families in the diaspora, safe and sound here but never truly at ease, the Tchakhmakhchians were both elated and vexed when a child of theirs read too much, thought too much, and swerved too far away from the ordinary" (Ibid.). At this point, Shafak through her narrative reveals an essential feature of novel writing which inherently possesses the power to dismantle power structures:

> Though books were potentially harmful, novels were all the more dangerous. The path of fiction could easily mislead you into the cosmos of stories where everything was fluid, quixotic, and as open to surprises as a moonless night in the desert. Before you knew it you

> could be so carried away that you could lose touch with reality – that stringent and stolid truth from which no minority should ever veer too far from in order not to end up unguarded when the winds shifted and bad times arrived. It did not help to be so naive to think things would not get bad, for they always did. Imagination was a dangerously captivating magic for those compelled to be realistic in life, and words could be poisonous for those destined always to be silenced. (*BI* 2006: 97)

In light of the literary status of Shafak's novel and with the contribution of her novel to exposing the enduring pain of the obscured and stigmatized Armenian minority in Turkey, we have witnessed how the writer's capacity for decolonial voice lending allows her to explore the colonial/imperial differences and the violence of the modern/colonial power matrix which has functioned through vehicles like modernism, civic nationalism, and secularism. In conclusion as Rubina Peroomian mentions, there is an enormous lack of Turkish-Armenian literature. However, with the stories of writers like Elif Shafak, Orhan Pamuk, Mehmet Uzun, and a number of others, artistic expressions can transmit the ongoing trauma of these rejected subjectivities (2008: 6).

With *BI* we come to realize how fiction can be manipulated, politicized, and provincialized — for example, the marketing strategies of the Western-based modern aesthetics insist on associating Shafak's work with multicultural literature and magic realism — to breed hegemonic narratives. Art and aesthetics is a central locus of struggle for all societies, especially for Turkish society which has gone through a swift transformation from a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional empire to a Turkist, secular, and so-called progressive nation-state. As Shafak writes:

> For instance, Maurice Ravel composed his Bolero in 1928. After a short while, Bolero was played in the ferryboats in Istanbul as part of the government's project of Westernization, to Westernize its citizens as quickly as possible by discouraging them from listen to traditional Ottoman music and "encouraging" them to listen to Western classics. ("Migrations" 2003)

Contrary to what Bakhtin claimed with his novelist discourse, in Turkey fiction and the novel have been the primary genre employed as a means of suppression, stigmatization, and reproducing hierarchical norms and patterns. Paradoxically, it is also a panacea for reversals and a prominent vehicle for producing alternative narratives if we also take Bakhtin's theories and *écriture féminine* into account. Still, one question by Shafak infers, in my opinion, a more implicit and hypocritical aspect of modern aesthetics: "Can't a woman Turkish writer write about a Chinese immigrant in the UK or a Norwegian gay professor in Oslo? Why not?".

In a similar vein, I will touch upon Emine Sevgi Özdamar's novel *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (1998) in which we read how the protagonist reflects her journey between art, namely acting and writing, and political activism. Hers is an attempt at reconciling art, politics, and a myriad of epistemes through decolonial voice lending, and often hints at the invisible but powerful colonial/imperial difference which specifically encompasses the fate of national and transnational migrant workers in Germany and Turkey. It is quite clear that her prime objective is "to politicize art but also to aestheticize politics" (Shafak 2003). The intertwining of aesthetic and political strategies in her work contains various framings of the East/West problematic of the Turkish diaspora in Germany in relation to the bloody socio-political upheavals in both Turkey and Germany. As Kader Konuk puts it, she tends to reproduce a "cultural-political memory" without sanctifying any ideology and belief system (quoted in Göbenli 2012: 25). While turning into a socialist female activist and an artist, the nameless narrator never radically manifests a flawless leftist discourse; on the contrary, she implicitly mocks the deeply patriarchal climate that obstructs and obscures activist women like her.

In pursuit of acting, the nameless narrator travels between various social milieus in Turkey and Germany such as factories and hostels, and connects them to the tropes of theatre, poetry, and ending up in a literary work, namely the novel itself. Framed by such a circular itinerary, crossing physical borders initially as a Turkish woman worker who gradually turns into a socialist in Germany, thereafter an activist reporter in Eastern Turkey where Kurds endure governmental and military oppression and violence, the narrator travels back and forth between art and politics. Özdamar employs decolonial voice lending to uncover inconspicuous female migrant workers in Germany, the masses migrating to Istanbul, and Kurds facing Turkey's colonial policies. In her narrative we often see that subversive and revolutionary forces are not only inherent in fictional works but also in cinema, theatre, and poetry.

In an analysis on Özdamar's authorship Mediha Göbenli indicates with reference to Kader Konuk how in Germany, "[Although] Özdamar is recognized due to her aesthetic and literary worth, but because of her language practice (change of the language structure) she is marginalized" (2012: 26). Conversely, in Turkey the author is constantly asked why she does not write in her mother tongue (Ibid.). Problematizing these perceptions, Göbenli writes:

> So sometimes the exclusion of writers like Özdamar is unavoidable. It needs time for "marginal" writers to be freed of the notion of "authenticity" which Rushdie calls a "bogy" (1992: 67), and for us to see beyond the merely exotic characteristics in this literature have extensive publication records and are highly visible intellectuals who are often being asked to comment on the situation of migrants and minority literature. (Ibid.)

Özdamar's marginality in authorship terms is apparent in her reconciling specific genres and presenting a narrative that draws on no hierarchy between these vehicles of art like cinema and poetry. It is, perhaps in this way that Özdamar challenges and so escapes, on the one hand, the orientalism trap of a Western-based literary canon and, on the other, the national identity trap in her assumed motherland, Turkey. As Moniqa Shafi notes:

> Firmly rooted in the present, she is constantly engaged in its formidable political and personal struggles. This engagement also shows that Özdamar is not promoting a kind of abstract cosmopolitan lifestyle since the heroine's multiculturalism is formed and enacted through local communities. (2003: 206)

Through the nameless narrator we observe poverty, oppression, and violence which Özdamar witnesses in the rural peripheries of Turkey. Equally, she mocks Istanbul's Europeanized intelligentsia and middle class' "uncritical admiration of all things European that turns into a colonial mimicry void of any subversive content"(Ibid.). Taking Shafi's view, in the novel there is a scene in which the narrator is invited by the Turkish Workers' Party to join a gathering in which a famous European communist, Heinar Kipphardt, will talk:

> At the drama school, students talked about the Kipphardt visit for many days. A man from Europe. What he said was, like sentences cast in concrete. A Turk who had studied in Europe got to the top seat at a table, and everyone hung on his lips. If a couple of people were discussing something at a table and a European was present, one said to the other: 'Man, even the European believes me, so how can you dare not believe me, you blockhead.' Europe was a club with which we smashed each other's heads. 'We are too much a la turc,' said the Turks, and did not know that even this expression came from Europe. 'Do not be à la turc, 'Do not behave a la turc'. European aspirin cured heart disease. With European cloth one could tell from a distance of forty yards that it was good. European shoes never wore out. European dogs had all studied at European dog schools. European women were natural blondes. European cars did not cause any acciddents. (193)

Moray McGowan in his analysis on Özdamar's *The Bridge* concludes that representations within the narrative do not wholly fit "into a binary model of European/Asian difference" (quoted in Shafi 2003: 206). While Shafi fully agrees with this, she emphasizes that "these insights are won through the experience of gender, travel, and acting" (Ibid.).

In this sense, I believe, neither Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theories of "novelistic discourse" nor *écriture féminine* and the politics of sexual difference of Luce Irigaray

which, in dealing with Muslim women, often simply re-invents the phallogocentric dichotomous logic, can be applied to the author's texts. As both of these intellectuals influential in Western European and North American feminist academia, especially on the basis of literary criticism, somehow brush off colonial/imperial differences which categorize subjectivities, geographies, communities, aesthetic perceptions, and epistemologies. "Categorization" is, indeed, the keyword in this context. Bakhtin's literary theories on novel writing is far too narrow a conception to account for Özdamar's narrative which contains lines of poems or references to them by revolutionary and anarchic historical poetical characters like Federico Garcia Lorca, Bertolt Brecht, and Nazım Hikmet. According to Bakhtin, poems derive their language and style from "a single linguistic consciousness" because they possess an underlying framework that becomes authoritarian, conservative, and dogmatic when reaching a stylistic limit (1981: 286). Additionaly, he notes that, "The world of poetry, no matter how many contradictions and insoluble conflicts the poet develops within it, is always illumined by one unitary and indisputable discourse. Contradictions, conflicts and doubts remain in the object, in thoughts, in living experiences-in short, in the subject matter-but they do not enter into the language itself" (Ibid.). For him, "In poetry, even discourse about doubts must be cast in a discourse that cannot be doubted" (Ibid.).

As we have seen with Elif Shafak, novels also have a similar potential to serve a mission of assimilating, stigmatizing, and/or obscuring certain characters which is clearly to be seen with the intentionally silenced Armenian and Kurdish minorities in Turkey. In fact, poetry becomes the healing art which Özdamar embraces to escape the indisputable ideologies violating the Turkish youth of the time, as she emphasizes in an interview with *Milliyet Sunday*:

> The theatre where I worked in the 1970s closed. In this period every day I read Brecht's poems aloud, listened to his songs. […] My dream […] was to work at his theatre with a student of his. As if I wanted to take my sick Turkish words into the sanatorium of a poet. Brecht is a great poet; I thought that his words would heal my words. I took the train with my sick words and came to Berlin. (2007: 5)

Özdamar never seems to categorize any genre or any other art, instead endeavouring to present a literary work in which vehicles for art like theatre, cinema, poetry, and fiction are all intertwined without being categorized as Bakhtin tends to.

What bothers the narrator profoundly is her personal constant journey between the language of politics and the language of art. After her return from eastern Turkey, her Brechtian teacher at the drama school warns her not to draw away from theatre by letting herself become absorbed by politics: "Politics did not draw me away from theatre, but my tongue divided in two. With one half I said: 'Solidarity with the oppressed peoples' with the other half of my tongue I spoke lines by Shakespeare: 'What thou seest when thou dost wake,/ Do it for thy true love take'" (228). Nevertheless, the division of the tongue and the different language which politics and art employ are touched upon carefully within the novel. The language of politics draws people away from each other and members of the Workers' Party divide into two factions: "The first faction said: In Turkey there is a working class, which can legally bring the Workers' Party to power. The second faction said: Turkey is a colony. First national-democratic revolution, then socialism" (228). She also portrays the division of the newspaper readers on the ferry into fascist, religious, and left-wing: "Politically the process that led to the 12th March 1971 (second military coup in the Turkish Republic) can be foreseen in the novel" (Göbenli 2012). Strikingly, the narrator draws our attention to a significant failure of any kind of political movement. In an ironic as well as intimate way she delienates how those newspapers became underwear for poor children: "When it was cold parents put the newspaper under their children's shirts. When one walked past a poor child one heard the rustling of newspaper" (230).

Struggling between art and these images and languages, one day her Marxist boyfriend Kerim's poet friend comes across her notes in which she has written about Kerim as if he is Lenin. In this scene the narrator is portrayed sitting in a cold room, surrounded by Leninist-Maoist-Trotskyist newspapers. The voice of the poet friend here comes to the fore, criticizing the leftist movements' sanctification of its leaders, always male, and visions of the time: "Are they your men? Lenin was a drunken vodka drinker and drunk he rode a bike in Switzerland, where he lived in exile. And drunk he mounted Rosa Luxemburg" (231). Thereafter, another visiting poet says: "You believe too much in the written word. Stalin was a murderer, because he believed in the written word, because he was a student of theology. Stop believing in the texts. Try to be a good actress. All poetic sentences are sketches of a future reality. Poetry never forces you to kill" (Ibid.). However, for the narrator, "the revolution comes in a single night, and then

paradise. Until then the way to there is hell", to which the poet replies, "That is when hell really begins" (232).

The same dilemma takes over while rehearsing in the acting school. The narrator closely examines the frequent tension between the fictional language of theatre, politics, and real life experiences. When the drama teacher asks why she wants to be an actress, she replies: "I want to live poetically. I want to awaken the passive life of my intelligence" (152). Truly, the acting school becomes the site where she is inspired intellectually and politically and strives to find an answer to the tension just referred to:

> Once I played a woman worker who was killed by police bullets. As she was dying, she was supposed to bleed from her mouth. In my mouth I had a small plastic sachet with fake blood, bit the sachet, which was supposed to burst, but it did not. I bit again and again, and that made me and the others laugh. But then we asked ourselves: People are really dying, and we are laughing, what are we doing here? We thought, we are parasites and are living on the blood of others, who really bled and sweathed. Those students who were left-wing asked: Theatre for art's sake or theatre for the people? How could one go down to the people with theatre? So they played workers, who were either heroes or poor, good people. (159)

Raising these confusing questions which are still discussed, the narrator inhabits a standpoint that analyzes the terms in which the fictional language of theatre can touch and elaborate on the real pain, oppression, and violence enacted on peoples. Likewise, her Brecht teacher tells them that they are not playing the workers "but an opinion about them", and notes that they are merely shouting to arouse pity and pain (Ibid.). In the light of this warning she starts to observe her environment and comes across a photo in a newspaper:

> In the newspaper I saw a working-class woman whose husband had been killed by the police. She was pressing a corner of her headscarf to her mouth, perhaps so as not to cry out. I also saw a scarf coming away from the head of a woman in Palestine, who was standing in front of the body of her child who had been killed, or the hat of a Jew which was falling off, as he bent down to a dying child in the street. But screaming and shouting was a big fashion at the drama school. The whole school screamed and shouted. The street sweepers from Anatolia were walking 470 miles to Istanbul because of their low wages, and at drama school we shouted while acting the part of one of these street sweepers. We shouted like the popular press, 'Cry of a worker's child', 'The unheard cry of a poor man', A starving people cries out.'(159)

Although vehicles of art like theatre, literary texts like novels and also cinema harbour a subversive force, they may lack competence in reflecting atrocities and traumatic experiences by losing touch with the painful reality.

In particular, the narrator locates cinema in the context of the same dilemma. Besides the drama school and the Workers' Party, she often goes to Cinemateque, a centre of the left-wing intellectuals in Istanbul. At the Cinemateque they see inspiring films such as Russian films about the Russian Revolution and prominent Russian left figures like Maxim Gorki or Tolstoy. For the narrator, "cinema" is an essential tool which Jean-Luc Godard defines as the first thing to be exchanged between countries (162). As a connector between countries and/or communities, cinema for her is as follows: "The stories of the Revolution in the films took place on the Russian streets, and we, the audience then stood in the street outside the cinema for a long time, as if the Istanbul streets were the extension of the streets of the Revolution from the Russian films" (164). However, once again the narrative goes towards twists, and the portrayal of the audience with myriad identities including workers, students, and intellectuals turns out to be delusional. While leaving the cinema, the narrator realizes that the group which appears to be a hybrid in fact form certain groups:

> The intellectuals first talked about the dead, but then they began to talk about the camerawork or the lighting of the film. As they were doing so they got into the same buses or taxis, went on talking in them and, still talking, they arrived at the 'Captian' restaurant, and when the waiters pushed the tables together for them, they went on talking about the film as they were standing. And in order to extend the revolutionary streets even further and to remain in the street for even longer, I also went with them. (165)

She embraces a thoroughly ironic narrative which unveils the pitfalls of purely theoretical or fictional phenomena and anarchism based on mere abstract notions. Thus, the other group she describes as follows (Ibid.):

> The street sweepers, however, who had been sent to the Cinematheque by their left-wing trade unions, never came to the 'Captain' restaurant with us. I often heard them say outside the cinema: 'Quick, let's go, it is dark now,' and they hurried away. When the workers and the intellectuals left at different speeds, it was as if there were two different nights. One night belonged to the workers to sleep in, and the other belonged to the intellectuals to keep on talking. (165)

Within the Turkish leftist movement she reveals the paradoxically normalized hierarchies in which the bold line between the workers and the leftist intellectuals becomes even thicker. Related to this view, Ahmet Samim in his essay in *New Left Review* explores this very process in leftist movements in Turkey at the time and indentifies the socialist viewpoint with a "'western socialist' hope of transforming Turkish society through the creation of a mass workers' party" (1981: 68). The Workers' Party, of which the narrator

is a member, was not truly a workers' party, as the votes obtained came "pre-dominantly from middle-class 'progressives' rather than from the poorer, workers' quarters" (69). Being swept by theories and losing touch with the proletariat, the leftist ideas like Marxism transformed into closed ideologies (82). This brings us back to the Kemalist legacy which prevailed over various paradigms in Turkey, especially the leftist discourse. Despite Mustafa Kemal's well-known and widely uttered quote, "The villager (peasant) is the lord of the nation", which has been perceived as proof of a revolutionary vision appropriate to leftist thought, "Ataturk was commandist towards the peasantry, cultist towards his own personality, a secular, Western-oriented modernizer who attempted to create some industry based on the state sector" (64). Still today, the Turkish intellectual milieu includes a considerable number of writers, artists, and thinkers claiming to be leftist and many other who call themselves Marxist. Yet even now Ahmet Samim's argument, made some decades ago, remains valid:

> Although this contributes to Turkey's having a cultural life which would be envied in some respects even by certain more advanced societies, at the same time there is a definite distance between socialist intellectuals and socialist political movements. This is as much a product of the unwillingness of the intelligentsia to become more active as the militants' common attitude of rejecting anything that seems so 'soft' as theory or art. The lack of such organic links, of course, contributes to the theoretical and cultural shallowness of the political cadres. (81-2)

Özdamar's novel *The Bridge* can thus be seen as a literary narrative filled with accounts of social and political events which she critically examines by being engaged in acting and writing. The world of art and aesthetics has underpinned her involvement in politics but also supplied her with the critical eye that fills the gap created by the official historiography of the leftist movements and Turkish diaspora. Detecting the patriarchal hierarchy in the leftist movements, she also questions the female empowerment which was largely ignored by leftist at the time (Alver 2012: 776). Unlike revolutionary and feminist novelists of the time like Pınar Kür and Ayla Kutlu, who even nourished female stereotypes such as the peasant or the ignorant and conservative rural women, Özdamar instantly mocks such attitudes.

Mocking the theoretical consciousness of the intellectuals who are portrayed just as non-stop talking figures, shouting students at the acting school who fake pain, the self-orientalism of the Turkish society no matter the social class, and the predominant Kemalist legacy, the author repeatedly employs exagerration. As John Berger states in

his preface, "In its cruelties, its injustices, its repetitiveness, and its gifts, there is nothing more exaggerated than reality. Governors, ruling class, bureaucrats, moralists, judges ceaselessly pretend that reality is not exaggerated" (2007: x). Intersecting poetry, theatre, and the novel genre, Özdamar dismantles Bakhtin's novelistic discourse. Contrary to ideas of her narrative as an example of *écriture féminine,* Özdamar rather seems to prefer to position herself as a border dweller who, via decolonial voice lending, transmits the counter-memory of silenced subjectivities. Indeed, the voice in the novel, as Berger notes, is never completely male of female (Ibid.). The politics of her fiction, namely decolonial aestheSis, lies at the very basis of her literary consciousness which does not surrender to the identity politics that confine and pigeonhole in particular female authors from the non-Western world (Shafak 2008: 13). As Shafak argued in the *Winternachten Lezing*, "The Western literary establishment wants us to tell 'characteristically Eastern stories' and leave wild imagination or avant-garde art forms to white, Western writers. Altogether we need to resist and challenge this division of labor" (2008: 13). As a result, Özdamar would neither really please the Western nor the Turkish (i.e. national) literary canon. Her trickster positioning by playing with the Eurocentric and national (i.e. Turkish) dominant narratives results in an attempt at an epistemic shift in terms of the normalized asymmetries of power grounded on the abstract universalism of modern aesthetics, zero point epistemology, and colonial/imperial difference.

6.5. The Imperial /Colonial Chronotope in Shafak and Özdamar's Fiction

Mikhail Bakhtin in his studies exploring and exposing the power reversing features of literary consciousness on the basis of the historical poetics of the Western and Russian novel formulates a conception of fiction with significant flaws which I have already touched on. Although he deals with elements like heteroglossia, polyphony, and double-voicedness in novels that, according to him, deploy resistance against any kind of power structure by providing visibility to stigmatized identities, he singles out "a specific type of existential psychological chronotope connected with human self-identification and exceeding the frame of static myth and folklore elements" (Tlostanova 2007: 406). The novel, for him, has a polyvalent nature by being born at the margins of official, dominant, and 'high' literature, "as a genre at first explicitly illegitimate and gravitating towards border, marginal characters and topoi" (Tlostanova 2001: 68). Thus, the border chronotope or the threshold chronotope is "linked with the problematic of existential

transition, a critical transitory moment in the life of a character" (Tlostanova 2007: 406). Notwithstanding Bakhtin's interest in characters on the peripheries in society, as Tlostanova notes, he did not really deal with imperial/colonial relations. We have already observed his reductionist and phallogocentric point of view on female sexuality and the body. Therefore, his silence about the "imperial and colonial power differential" is not really unexpected (Ibid.). Nonetheless, his "border chronotope" is a functional component of his novelistic discourse, and so it is useful to depart from this notion and elaborate on it through the lense of the "coloniality of power" (Quijano 2000).

For Madina Tlostonova, writers like Orhan Pamuk (to which I would add Shafak and Özdamar) are 'transcultural writers' who are "coming from or writing about the cultures that have been marked with imperial/colonial difference" (2007: 406). These writers never thoroughly come into the zone of postcolonial literary critiques since the categories of postcolonial literature are "formulated in respect of a certain area", and thus "cannot work for all other cultural regions and need to be necessarily verified for each particular milieu" (Tlostanova 2001: 64). These literary figures therefore have a complicated picture that demonstrates on the one hand "a certain nostalgic and at the same time parodic memory of their ethnic cultural background", and, on the other hand, that "there is a balancing between their inclination to several imperial and colonial traditions" (2007: 407). With regard to Shafak and Özdamar's literary works, we notice the subaltern position of Turkey's imperial (i.e. Ottoman) history "in relation to capitalist modern empires and recently, the dictate of Americanization and globalization... [which] lead[s] to additional splitness of identification in the works of transcultural authors, who cannot avoid reacting to the Western cultural expansion, which is also reflected in the way they interpret the imperial/colonial chronotope" (Ibid.).

The imperial/colonial chronotope, or the decolonial chronotope, is a portrayal of a threshold positioning, namely a transcultural subjectivity, which is characterized by in-betweenness in terms of time and space. Furthermore, it represents "a particular condition that of restless non-belonging and specific double consciousness" (406). Tlostanova hints at an 'imagined geography' of transculturation which she defines as "an intentionally invented space, based on playing on various cultural topi, recreating and rethinking the artistic reality, distorting the angles under which it is placed in relation to the real world" (407). The subjectivity which is set forth has a tendency towards "isolation from any real

locales, to the unimaginable and ephemeral nature of the spaces, which gradually leads the authors further and further away from any spatial stability and materiality" (Ibid.). What is more, time is another fundamental factor in this imperial/colonial chronotope, such as the Western linear evolutionary understanding of time, "dominant in modernity, as well as the efforts to correlate it with the destiny of the whole mankind, is constantly presented as relative and argueable" (408). Instead, as Tlostanova indicates, time in the chronotope is cyclical and so multi-dimensional and constnatly on the move. Additionally, she argues that this aspect of time engenders "the revival of various concepts of cyclical time, both connected with traditional cultures and newly created and on the other hand, sometimes, in the works of the same authors the concept of time correlates with the reconceptualized but recognizable idea of time and history, coming from natural sciences" (Ibid.). Therefore, certain characters from those transcultural novels quite easily reconcile with her "concept of time the cyclical half-forgotten traditions, the logic of a netgame and the concepts of post-human existence" (Ibid.).

In her essay, "Transcultural Tricksters Beyond Times and Spaces: Decolonial Chronotopes and Border Selves" (2013), Tlostanova, regarding transcultural subjectivity and the imperial/colonial chronotope combined with aesthetics, writes that in transculturation "mutuality and rejection of any homogenous synthesized worlds and selves" are essential (12). For her, "The aesthetics of transculturation is primarily a trans-modern aesthetics in the sense of overcoming modernity and its myths, values, taste norms and thinking patterns, thus decolonizing being, knowledge and perception. A crucial sphere of the intersection of being and knowledge is art" (Ibid.). It is perfectly suited for a decolonial turn because it links reason and emotions through epistemology. In many non-Western, ex-colonized, and newly re-colonized spaces the sphere of art remains one of the few islands of liberation of subjectivity and knowledge, superseding the familiar discourses and clichés of modernity, not merely through political opposition but also through an aesthetic subversion. These models undermine and destabilize modernity from the position of the outside created from the inside thus deconstructing modernity's "hubris of the zero point". (Ibid.)

In this context, the transcultural subjectivity that comes to the fore with both Shafak's and Özdamar's novels cannot be easily classified within the postcolonial scheme due to the versatile structure of the Turkish model of cultural colonialist and modernist

strategies, namely self-colonialism, and its own peculiar 'subalternized' and 'orientalized' imperial history. Thus, with the proposed 'transcultural subjectivity' and a reformulated version of Bakhtin's 'border chronotope' (i.e. imperial/colonial chronotope), an approach that infers the condition of "being elsewhere" as Salman Rushdie (1991: 12) puts it but is never a blurred category of imagination, I will elaborate on the depiction of such a chronotope on the basis of Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* and Özdamar's *The Bridge*.

Before starting with the novels, it should be noted that the authors here show up as the decolonial tricksters who are strongly aware of the imperial/colonial differences and dwell in its borders. From such an approach emerges the decolonial aestheSis and so the decolonial voice lending that connects individuals who suffer the colonial wound. Tlostanova also labels this a form of "transmodern decolonial creativity" performed by the trickster artist who dwells in a myriad of "cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious spaces of the imperial/colonial borderlands" (2013: 13). This type of creativity "becomes a way of liberating knowledge and being through subversion, tricksterism, resistance, re-existence and overcoming modernity and its creative mechanisms, norms and limitations" (Ibid.). In this sense, the imperial/colonial borderland or chronotope which Tlostanova touches upon can be analyzed in both novels primarily through Istanbul, the mysterious ancient city between Europe and Asia. Nevertheless, Özdamar's European city, Berlin, should not be neglected as this also appears as a distinctive model for the chronotope, which likewise evokes the narrator's transcultural subjectivity in *The Bridge*.

To start with Shafak's novel, the magical and polyphonic chronotope of Istanbul is portrayed as an illusive city that throughout history has hosted a myriad of communities, subjectivities, and religions. The semiotic nature of Istanbul lies in its buildings both belonging to the Byzantine and Ottoman times and later to the modernized nation-state of the Turkish republican period. Istanbul is a recurring central topos in several novels of Shafak who has deep affinity with her special ties to the city:

> For someone who sees the role of the artist as a commuter, Istanbul constitutes a remarkable hub and treasure. After all in Istanbul categories constantly mix and interweave. East and West are relational categories and yet, they are often used as mutually exclusive. East and West are ever changing, slippery words and yet somehow they can be made to sound as if they were static, almost eternal. Istanbul, however, is one city on the surface of the earth where you learn right away to mistrust these two trendy terms. And if you spend enough time here, you might just as well completely stop using them. Istanbul makes one

> comprehend, perhaps not intellectually but intuitively, that East and West are ultimately imaginary concepts, and can thereby be de-imagined and re-imagined. (2008: 11)

The title of the novel refers to Istanbul's elusive characteristic through "the bastard" who apparently is Asya, an angst-ridden and nihilist young Istanbulite and Zeliha Kazancı's illegitimate daughter. Asya symbolizes the city's intentionally obscured and erased past, rich with various ethnicities, religions, and cultures, as a result of Kemalism's nationalization and modernization project.

Armanoush, as an Armenian-American living in the diaspora feels suffocated due to a constant physical and psychological transit between her father's Armenian family and her American mother who, after becoming estranged from the Armenian family, for the sake of revenge re-married to a Turk, the Kazancı's son who left for America after raping his sister Zeliha. While her restlessness derives from a yearning for the past and her search for her Armenian identity, Asya's is vice versa. As for Asya there is no past she can relate to. Asya is a young woman who was born out of wedlock and never had the chance to get to know her father which as a result triggers restlessness in her, and as a reply to Armanoush's search for identity her reply would be as follows, "I feel the same way. I mean, if my father were deceased, this vagueness would be over once and for all. That is what infuriates me most. I cannot help thinking he could be anyone" (174). While Armanoush's character is mainly marked with ethnic, traditional, and cultural influences alluding to the defeated capital's (i.e. imperial Istanbul's) divers socio-political structure, Asya stands for the Westernized and modernized Turkish Republic that severed ties with the mysterious Ottoman past and became a chronotope mimicking the West. This aspect can be clearly seen through the two women's dialogue on their music taste. Asya is a fan of Johnny Cash, while Armanoush is completely into Classical, Jazz, and specifically Armenian music. By trespassing her limits Armanoush asks Asya why she does not listen to the music of her Middle Eastern roots, to which Asya reveals in her reply how she has become alien to the peculiar and oriental topography of Istanbul:

> "What do you mean? Asya sounded perplexed. "We *are* Western"
>
> "No you are not Western. Turks are Middle Eastern but somehow in constant denial. And if you had let us stay in our homes, we too could still be Middle Easterners instead of turning into a diaspora people."
>
> …
>
> "What do you mean?"

> "What do I mean? I mean, Sultan Hamid's Pan-Turkish and Pan-Islamic yoke. I mean, the 1909 Adana massacres or the 1915 deportations… Do those ring a bell? Did you not hear anything about the Armenian genocide?" (178)

Indeed, it is this loosing of ties with the mysteries of the city's imperial history and the negating of its correlation with Eastern leitmotifs that has led to self-hatred, as Armanoush deduces about Turks and the "mimicry problematic" that of imperial difference as Tlostanova (2007: 414) puts it in her essay on Orhan Pamuk's novel *The Black Book* (1990). Regarding the "mimicry problematic", Tlostanova emphasizes that, "In its Turkish variant [it] acquires a specific overtone ― here we speak not of a colony in the real sense of the word, but of a defeated empire, conquered by the winning West not by means of colonial expansion, but rather by more subtle ways of cultural and epistemic colonization" (Ibid.). Strikingly, the same Asya who identifies herself with the West, when earlier informing her friends at the Cafe Kundera about the upcoming arrival of Armanoush, possesses a contradictory perspective:

> But given that she is a college student, I bet she is doing some research on 'Islam and the oppression of women' or 'patriarchal precedents in the Middle East.' Otherwise why would she want to stay at our nuthouse―you know, full of women― when there are so many hotels in this city, cheap and funky? I am sure she wants to interview each of us about the situation of women in Muslim countries and all that―". (149)

This tension of being haunted with the sense of self-colonialism, an inferiority complex, and in-betweennes becomes obvious especially when the two girls pay a visit to the Cafe Kundera together. The cafe is a sort of "rabbit hole", or even a microcosm of the modern Istanbul that is subjected to an overwhelming violation of Western imperialism (81).

Cafe Kundera appears as a metaphorical space corresponding to a big picture, the illusive and isolating chronotope of Istanbul residing at the threshold between Europe and Asia:

> Cafe Kundera was a small coffee shop on a narrow, snaky street on the European side of Istanbul. It was the only bistro in the city where you wasted no energy on conversation and tipped the waiters to be treated badly. How and why it was named after the famous author, nobody knew for sure ―a lack of knowledge magnified by the fact that there was nothing, literally *nothing*, inside the place reminiscent of either Milan Kundera or any one of his novels. (76)

Accordingly, the narrator underlines the fact that, "the cafe was a fictive place with fictive people as the regulars", which appears as the most plausible theory to relate the cafe to a widely known fiction writer. Definitely, this becomes more evident when the reader is

introduced to characters like Dipsomaniac Cartoonist who "was famous for a series of political cartoons in which he depicted the entire cabinet as a flock of sheep and the prime minister as a wolf in sheep's clothing" (78). Then, there is the controversial Non-Nationalist Scenarist of Ultranationalist Movies who is the creator of TV series like "Timur the Lionheart, which featured a hefty, robust national hero capable of mashing entire battalions of enemies into a bloody puree", and "When asked about his tacky TV show and movies, he would defend himself by arguing that he was a nationalist by profession but a true nihilist by choice" (79). Moreover, there is the "Exceptionally Untalented Poet", the "Closeted Gay Columnist", and the nameless wife of the Dipsomaniac Cartoonist whom the narrator depicts as a more talented but less known cartoonist (82).

In this context, the Dipsomaniac Cartoonist, the spokesman of the group, and all the other members according to the Armenian-American Baron Baghdassarian, cyber friend of Armanoush, are simply "all faces and names from the bohemian, avant-gardist, arty-farty side of Istanbul. Typical third world elite who hate themselves more than anything in the world" (216). The Baron's perspective becomes clearer with Dipsomaniac Cartoonist's expression in the novel:

> Boredom is the summary of our lives. Day after day we wallow in ennui. Why? Because we cannot abandon this rabbit hole for fear of a traumatic encounter with our own culture. Western politicians presume there is a cultural gap between Eastern Civilization and Western Civilization. If it were that simple! The real civilization gap is between the Turks and *the* Turks. We are a bunch of cultured urbanites surrounded by hillbillies and bumpkins on all sides. (81)

Evidently, Shafak's touching upon the perplexity of Turkishness is a recurrent motif of the novel which she examines both through the Kazancı and Tchakhmakhchian families' Armenian past. The notion of "Turkishness" is treated by Shafak as a product of the nationalization project under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal who, with his elite cadre, forced a homogeneous, secularized, westernized, and modernized Turkish identity on the country irrespective of cultural and linguistic differences. This Turkish civic identity united "against the 'others' – the Armenians and the Greeks" (Göl 2005: 130). Thus, Turkishness in Shafak's novel strongly corresponds with imperial Istanbul's multicultural, esoteric nature which is difficult for Europeans and other outsiders to

categorize. Another speech by the Dipsomaniac Cartoonist explains the in-betweenness in detail:

> We are stuck. We are stuck between the East and the West. Between the past and the future. On the other hand there are the secular modernists, so proud of the regime they constructed, you cannot breathe a critical word. They have got the army and half of the state on their side. On the other hand there are the conventional traditionalists, so infatuated with the Ottoman past, you cannot breathe a critical word. They have got the general public and the remaining half of the state on their side. What is left for us? [...] The Modernists tell us to move forward, but we have no faith in their idea of progress. The Traditionalists tell us to move backward, but we do not want to return to their ideal order either. (81)

Obviously, the Dipsomaniac Cartoonist mediates Shafak's criticism about the rapid change and modernization that took place under the Kemalist regime in the first years of Republican Turkey. Most of the characters in the novel "remain the aliens in the ancient Constantinople, who only manage to externally acquire the legacy of other ancient cultures, at the cross-roads of which stands the old city" (Tlostanova 2007: 411). Likewise, as Tlostanova emphasizes with reference to Orhan Pamuk's novel, in Shafak's novel "characters are haunted with the sense of their own defeat, sadness, despair, peculiar stagnation (typical of all inhabitants of the defeated empires) and various post- and neo-imperial inferiority complexes" (Ibid.).

The portrayal of the intellectual and artist cadre seems problematic, as they are "stuck at the border, their modest world lacks a center and is not indicated on the maps, it is everywhere and nowhere at once, and they are not able either to be themselves or someone else" (Ibid.). Strikingly, they even contradict themselves when it comes to the discussion of conservative perceptions. A conversation between the Dipsomaniac Cartoonist and his wife exposes his phallogocentric thinking. Thus, when Exceptionally Untalented Poet utters the famous line by Tolstoy, "all happy families resemble one another but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way", the nameless wife protests by saying, "The guy had a wife who took care of every little detail, raised the dozens of kids they had, and worked like a dog so that his majesty the great Tolstoy could concentrate and write novels" (85). Thereupon, her cartoonist husband asks what she wants, to which she replies, "Recognition! That is what I want. I want the whole world to admit that if given the opportunity, Tolstoy's wife could be a better writer than him" (Ibid.). Interestingly, the anarchist and freedom-seeking cartoonist gets disturbed by his wife's challenge which reveals his paradoxical character.

Nevertheless, he is not the only paradoxical figure, as the Non-Nationalist Scenarist of Ultranationalist Movies is also a problematic character. Although being another intellectual figure in the novel, he turns out to be rather conservative and ignorant about the pains of the Armenian diaspora. His voice exposes the stereotypical Turkish nationalists' voice in Turkey who argues the following regarding Armanoush's story:

> But you have to understand it was a time of war. People died on both sides. Do you have any idea how many Turks have died in the hands of Armenian rebels? Did you ever think about the other side of the story? I will bet you did not! How about the suffering of the Turkish families? It is all tragic but we need to understand that 1915 was not 2005. Times were different back then. It was not even a Turkish state back then, it was the Ottoman Empire, for God's sake. The premodern era and its premodern tragedies. (209)

However, his intellectual and artistic attitude is completely hypocritical. As Asya later reveals, while he denies being a nationalist himself, he makes tons of money by writing nationalist scripts (211). Tlostanova relates these contradictions to the forgetting and the negation of the mysteries of an imperial past whose capital is Istanbul (2007: 412). The Kemalist way of othering the Ottoman variant of multicultural existence, particularly the non-Muslim Armenians and others, has merely produced the "mimicry problematic" that presents a weak copy of the Western original (Tlostanova 2007: 414). Therefore, it would not be so surprising to encounter a Turkish history teacher like Auntie Cevriye in the novel who tries to establish a highly disputable difference between Turks and Arabs in order to prove Turkish identity's suitability for European ways and culture, "The problem with the Turks is that we are constantly being misinterpreted and misunderstood. The Westerners need to see that we are not like the Arabs at all. This is a modern, secular state"(135). What is more, she accuses the Greeks and Armenians who brainwash the Americans and Europeans regarding Turkey, "So they are misled into believing that Turkey is the country of the *Midnight Express*" (135). In conclusion, we have witnessed how the imperial/colonial chronotope, namely Istanbul, works through Shafak's novel intertwined with the inhabitants of the city who are marked with the sense of self-colonial inferiority complexes, despair, and lacking any centre in an existence based on denial and ignorance towards the imperial past of the defeated capital itself.

In this context, Özdamar's *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (1998) reflects a similar characteristic to Shafak's novel in terms of portraying Istanbul as the central imperial/colonial chronotope. The existential chronotope of Istanbul, likewise, is deeply

connected to its inhabitants' self-identification with an unavoidable past full of mysteries, despair, violence, and a painful breaking up on the one hand, and richness, magic, authenticity, and the peculiar complexity of the imperial capital on the other. The bridge of the Golden Horn in the title refers to a constant transition of myriad subjectivities, communities, empires, and so histories. The Golden Horn had a vital role in protecting Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, from unwelcome intruders. The Golden Horn is one of the fundamental symbols of the imperial city with a two-fold feature, that is, it hints at one of the prime sources of both the Western and also the Eastern civilizations. Correspondingly, it represents the defeated capitals of both the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. Nevertheless, the historical ethnic, religious, and cultural richness of the imperial city was obscured with the advent of the Turkish nation-state. Although the severing of ties with Ottoman times by mimicking or even constructing a copy of the Western original was meant to conquer the chronotope city of Istanbul, its inhabitants cannot escape being haunted by a topography persistently overloaded with the polyphonic voices and leitmotifs of a forgotten and mysterious past.

The chapter entitled, "The long table at the 'Captain' Restaurant" is based on the narrator's experiences following her arrival in Istanbul after a long stay in Germany as a *Gastarbeiter*. The nameless narrator, the main transcultural character in the novel, initially realizes her inability to master Istanbul's topos and even feels estranged from her beloved mother whom she defines as "the woman who was supposed to be [her] mother" (134). Furthermore, she conceives the deepening of a Eurocentric neo-imperial inferiority complex dominating the Turkish society, for example Women dying their hair blond and fetishizing the snub nose of Liz Taylor and Kim Novak which started as a trend when the famous pop singer Ajda Pekkan had an operation and dyed her hair blond to look European (136). The Kemalist social imaginary portraying the proper Western and modern female citizen is taken over this time through Westernized fashion icons. Nevertheless, the transcultural author, as Tlostanova puts it, instantly recreates an "intersection of space, memory, alternative histories and topographies" into the peculiar chronotope of Istanbul (Tlostanova 2007: 406). When for the first time she passes the Bridge of the Golden Horn which links the two European parts of Istanbul, the feeling "of restless non-belonging and a specific double consciousness, which generate complex relations with time and space and work for the creation of imperial/colonial chronotope"

crystallizes (Ibid.). This inner restlessness of the narrator intersects with the evolving of time and the scenes she encounters:

> The long shadows of the people walking across the Bridge of the Golden Horn fell on to the ships from both sides of the bridge and walked along their white bodies. Sometime the shadow of a street dog or a donkey also fell there, black and white. After the last ship the shadows of people and animals fell on to the sea and kept walking there. Across these shadows flew the seagulls with their white wings, their shadows also fell on the water, and their cries mingled with the ships' sirens and the cries of the street sellers. As I walked across the bridge, it seemed to me as if I had to push the air ahead of me with my hands. Everything moved very slowly, as in an overexposed, old slow-motion film. Small children and old men carried canisters left over from Ottoman times on their backs and sold the water to passers-by. They shouted: 'Waateerr' into the sky, and people looked as if they were holding on tight to these 'waateerr' voices, so as not to faint because of the heat. (142-3)

Apparently, "Time in the chronotope of in-between-ness changes its usual characteristics, such as linearity, mono-dimensionality, and irreversibility, becoming multidimensional, multicyclical and moving with different speeds and in different directions" (Tlostanova 2013: 23). There is a sense of hostility expanding from the city's topography towards the miserable crowds mingling with animals and the bridge which is almost sinking into the water. The showing up of the canisters from the Ottoman period interrupts the European side of Istanbul and through the shoutings of the water-sellers. Regarding this scene, the narrator imagines herself to be in an old slow motion movie. As Tlostanova puts it:

> Various time models coincide in the minds of transcultural characters who cannot be easily attributed to the cyclical model of time, because they live in the lacunas and gaps between the linearity of modernity, whose inadequacy they sharply realize, and other time structures, which are being brought forward in their minds in various situations and often act together. (Ibid.)

The loosing of ties with the mysteries of the imperial history of the city and the negating of its connection with Eastern leitmotifs gradually surrenders to a revival of the lost, imperfect, but still important imperial past with the literal appearance of the bridge on the Golden Horn.

Much like Cafe Kundera in Shafak's novel, the 'Captain' restaurant is a place where the left-wing intellectuals gather and hold discussions about "the dependent bourgeoisie, feudalism, Latin America, Africa, Swiss bank, Kurds, feudal peasantry, potential of the Turkish working class, national bourgeoisie" (180). In general, they debate westernization, nationalism, Americanization, and the catastrophic increase of capitalist power structures. The narrator spends hours with the leftist intellectuals who

tell stories non-stop about Ottoman Istanbul in which various ethnicities, cultures, and religious beliefs intermingled (179). For the narrator, the 'Captain' restaurant symbolizes the extended revolutionary streets of the leftist movements, especially the Russian Revolution, which represent another subaltern empire besides the Ottoman empire within the frame of the colonial/imperial difference proposed by decolonialist thinkers.

It is important to note that another community that regularly comes to the restaurant are the Istanbul Greeks, who at the end of the night "smash the plates on the floor for sheer enjoyment" (168). It seems that the the restaurant turns out to be a microcosm of the outer world, as the narrator reflects on later: "We sat there in the arms of the sea and of the warm night, and the world dwindled to this restaurant; it was as if I had been born there with all these old and young men and would die there at the end of the night, and meanwhile we would listen to many stories" (Ibid.). Through the stories, another Istanbul awakens to the night:

> One of the intellectuals related that, after nationalist Turks had destroyed the shops, Orthodox churches and cemetries of the Istanbul Greeks on a September night in 1955, many Istanbul Greeks had gone to Athens because they were afraid. Before they left Istanbul one family, who lived on an Istanbul island, threw all their old records into the sea, and the beautiful old Greek songs on the records floated for days in the Sea of Marmara. (Ibid.)

To overcome such painful stories of the violent Turkification policies implemented by the Kemalist regime and in order to dismantle the rhetoric of modernization and westernization, the intellectuals tell stories about the Ottoman whores who first appeared in 1565. Another striking story is about an erotic book entitled *Bahname,* a 700-year-old book in a library in Istanbul. In the book there was advice "on how men and women should smell and kiss one another, and how many times one should make love at which age. Those who were still in puberty should make love every second day, between twenty and thirty twice a day, once a night" (167).

The emphasis on the *Bahname* has special significance since it is also a book which Shafak has a personal interest in. In her speech at the *Winternachten Lezing* she indicated that, "for many in the West, as well as many members of non-Western cultural elites elsewhere, whenever 'sexuality' and 'Islam' appear side by side, they constitute an impossible pair to consider favorably" (2008: 16). The terms only match when it comes to issues like honor killings, polygamy, or homophobia. Nevertheless, "Sex and sexuality

in the Middle East are not only about customs and prohibitions, much less captivity and confinement. Sexuality is also about delight and joy, physical pleasure, emotional gratification and spiritual euphoria" (Ibid.). At this point she refers to *Bahname* ('Book of Pleasure') which "was several times translated and widely circulated in the Ottoman Empire" (Ibid.). Shafak reveals this ignorance linked to the Westernization and colonization of art, perceptions, and epistemes:

> Likewise highbrow art in Turkey has little touch with the local roots. The urban, secular, well-educated and Westernized elite are well acquainted with Balzac and Flaubert and Woolf, but less so with folk Islam or Sufi literature or religious stories. Modernization *alla turca* embodied a rupture in time whereby the past and the future have been clearly distinguished from one another, and the latter has been valued at the expense of the former. Likewise among Turkey's cultural elite, the old erotic sources of narration are mostly forgotten. They do not penetrate the world of 'highbrow art'. Being the youngest of all literary genres in Muslim countries, the novel has often times embarked on its journey as the voice of the bourgeoisie at a time when there was only a scanty Muslim bourgeoisie; it was the vehicle of Westernisation and modernization. Thus the novelists were, right from the start, cut off from Eastern narrative traditions. (17)

Therefore, it is quite important that both these Turkish female authors elaborate Ottoman literary traditions. And with regard to Özdamar's novel, it becomes evident that the transcultural writer does not just try to cross the borders, but attempts to become the border herself by uncovering silenced literary texts. Thus, we are introduced to a new subjectivity that abandons "the deeper epistemic and ontological grounds of modernity performing a rupture and delinking from its rhetoric"(Tlostanova 2013: 18).

Within this context, it is important to underline that, like Cafe Kundera, the 'Captain' restaurant is also located in the European side of Istanbul. For the narrator, both sides, namely the Asian and European, have different meanings: "The sea separated the two sides, and when I had the water between my parents and myself, I felt free" (172). Thereafter, she indicates that the two sides of Istanbul are like two distinctive countries. Indeed, when she travels to the European side, she connects with Berlin, the city she had to leave after working and living for two years but will return to at the end of the novel to become an actress. The cities, Berlin and Istanbul, reflect an imaginary in-between time and space completely while she passes the sea and considers her decision to marry the schizophrenic boy: "Berlin had been like a street to me. As a child I had stayed in the street until midnight, in Berlin I had found my street again" (147). While the narrator longs for a far-away city, she is physically crossing the Bosphorus: "The ship was just in

the middle of between Asian and European Istanbul," and when the ship reaches the Asian side she realizes she "never ever wanted to get married" (147). This short passage from one of the novels reveals how, once again, linearity clashes with cyclical time models. That is, the character's narrative that starts with a longing for a city continues with men falling in love with her, and then all of a sudden an actress pops out: "The actress came out of my body, she pushed a man and a child in front of her and threw them from the ship into the Sea of Marmara" (147). This scene foreshadows her future return to Germany to become an artist.

As a result, we have seen how the chronotope acquires a central function in both Shafak and Özdamar's literary works. Their transcultural fiction and authorship is deeply marked with the imperial and colonial difference which reflect subjectivities, motifs, and themes that trangress the linearity of time and connect with a spatial memory of the forgotten past. Related to this, Tlostanova stresses "the importance of transculturation as a potentially more egalitarian and reciprocal cultural, linguistic, epistemic, ethical, existential, and aesthetic relation" (2013: 27). She underlines the significance of emphasizing the complexity of the worlds through such literary narrative and "believing in the possibility of co-existence and fruitful polylogue of many worlds that comprise it" (Ibid.). In this context, transcultural art, or art based on decolonial aestheSis as Tlostanova puts it, promises an effective process of liberating "our knowledge, being and aesthetic perception from the myths and norms of exhausted modernity" (Ibid.).

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Learning to Un-learn in Order to Re-learn

On 16th December 2014 a fourth expert meeting of the International Research and Network project Religion and Gender took place at Ghent University. The participants went into the discussion with the aim of formulating an alternative way of thinking and writing that would not give into privileged Western-based grand narratives which obscure "other" epistemes, locales, geographies, cultures, and so subjectivities. Our moderator, Sarah Bracke, Professor of Sociology of Religion and Culture at Ghent, along with Paola Bacchetta, Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at Berkeley, and other PhD candidates came to the conclusion that we need to make room for alternative narratives and new categories of subjectivities both in academia and other socio-political and cultural formations. The unquestionable fact is that the modern and imperial territorial epistemology and cosmology dominates our perceptions about subjectivity and knowledge.

The discussion at this academic gathering is emblematic of the theoretical basis of this thesis and what I think is interesting and important about the novels I have analyzed. Professors Bracke and Bacchetta presented a parallel decolonial frame that manifested an epistemic shift and a different vernacular to dismantle the dichotomous logic of "the West and the rest". Instead of homogenizing "the rest", intellectuals, scholars, writers, journalists, activists, and others involved in coming to know and understand "the rest" should trace local histories, subjectivities, cosmologies, and epistemologies. Nevertheless, the geography of reason and so knowledge will not shift immediately, as decolonialist thinkers such as Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova would remind us with reference to the positioning of Third World theories in academia compared to European and North American ones. Thus, they write that "there is an unconscious tendency to think that theories that originate in the Third World (or among Black or gay intellectuals) are valid only for the Third World (or Black and gay people), while theories that originate in the First World (and created by White and heterosexual people) have a global if not universal validity" (2012: 3). For them, this modern and imperial way of thinking is certainly coming to an end. But still there is the common belief that "the Whites have knowledge and the Indians have Wisdom; the Blacks have

experience and the Whites have philosophy; the Third World has culture and the First World has science unfortunately is still well and alive" (Ibid.). Therefore these scholars propose that "[we] start learning to unlearn this assumption among others in order to relearn" (Ibid.).

But then, where does literature reside within this realm of (epistemologic) power relations? And, to recall the previous question, why is it vital to write as a Middle Eastern, namely Turkish, female writer from a decolonial feminist standpoint? A similar question with regard to the significance of story telling arose at the expert meeting on which Bracke offered a stimulating example. Mark Jordan, a scholar of Christian Thought at Harvard University and a colleague of Bracke, gives classes based on queer theology. Strikingly, what Jordan pushes his students to do through the class is simply to write without being bound by any academic genre around subjects such as sexuality, body, and religion. He thus links student compositions to literature and, what is more, he constructs a discursive path that would offer alternative narratives by dislodging macro-narratives. Thus, we come back to the interplay between story writing/telling and power that we explored through postcolonial writers like Chinua Achebe, Caryl Phillips, and Toni Morrison and feminist literary works such as Virginia Woolf, Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many others.

Within this context, Middle Eastern/Turkish female authors like Shafak and Özdamar, both in their national and transnational realm with regard to the drawbacks of Turkish- and Western-based feminisms, recognize how many different subjectivities play a significant role in shifting the geo- and body-politics of privileged *de facto* knowledge and identities. However, if we consider "aesthetics" through the lense of decolonial thinking and on the basis of Walter Mignolo's accounts, it turns out that even aesthetics represents an essential aspect of the formerly mentioned colonial matrix of power.

For this reason, in the process of working on the dissertation I decided to introduce Bakhtin's theories on the novel and the notion of *écriture féminine* and the politics of sexual difference of Irigaray which seemed to apply to my literary analysis of Shafak and Özdamar's novels. Nevertheless, overlooking colonial/imperial differences and the colonial/modern gender system, I have argued, weakens the recognition of pluriversalities and the many different subjectivities without giving into any dichotomous logic which is

a disputable matter with regard to the above mentioned theories. Coming back to aesthetics, in contemporary fiction, story telling, and cinema we can witness how even these works of art are shaped and function around a Western-based dominant discourse built on modernity and its myths, values, and thinking patterns. Therefore, in the chapters my most essential and provoking anchor in employing the decolonial feminist paradigm and decolonial aestheSis has been the decolonial assumption which insistently calls for "learning to un-learn in order to re-learn". This decolonial proposal also happened to be the outcome we arrived at in the expert meeting with Professors Sarah Bracke and Paola Bacchetta.

So far, I have argued that Shafak and Özdamar have called into question the East-West (North-South)/center-periphery/primitive-modern entanglements by moving beyond such oppositional divisions. Both Shafak and Özdamar re-inscribe the fragmented representations of cultural memory from within and without national boundaries in order to replace the homogenous conjectures and solipsistic formations of identity in their respective geographies and locations. They multiply the linguistic, ethnic, and religious references by working through fictional characters, settings, and narratives.

In this context, by evoking my primary motivational stimulus of this project, Clare Hemmings' *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011), my goal in the dissertation was to elaborate on literature's contribution as a fictional response to the so-called "White Turk" feminist identity crisis. Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Özdamar's *Life is a Caravanserai* (1992) and *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (1998) have been discussed as notable novels that evoke this fictional response to the impasse of the mainly secular-modern Turkish feminist framework resulting from the invisible but substantially hegemonic logic of coloniality/modernity which includes various vehicles such as secularism, modernism, progressivism, and also westernization.

I argued that contrary to the coercive socio-political, ideological, and cultural structure of the decades old Western centric social imaginary in Turkey, these novels present us with a decolonial imaginary and so pluriversality instead of Eurocentric, universalized, and so homogenized subjectivities, epistemologies, and cosmologies. By approaching these novels through decolonial feminism I have traced the invisible, marginalized, and silenced subjectivities in the modern Turkish social imaginary, above

all those of women and of the Armenian and Turkish diaspora. Obscured figures of the working class, minorities and religious mystics, who have all been undervalued in grand narratives based on a Turkish version of Eurocentric modernity has resulted in self-colonization and/or self-orientalism. Thus, I have argued that all these figures can gain visibility through the decolonial narratives of these transcultural writers. I also emphasized that these novelists are significant for proposing counter-memories through their narratives, female characters, and the historically crucial socio-political phenomena they discuss. Contrary to secular state policies, the Turkish feminist paradigm, and even so-called feminist literary texts that have disregarded and ignored the presence of certain identities, through Shafak and Özdamar's novels these female images have come to the fore.

I started my analysis by asking why telling stories about gender and feminism can interrupt narratives that make up dominant Western and Turkish feminist stories. My emphasis was on prominent Turkish feminist narratives that mimic hegemonic Western feminist stories. I emphasized that writing/telling stories is about inventing and re-inventing power structures. As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie puts it, "Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (TED, 2009). Thus, stories are built on a bilateral terrain which can be slippery and so deadly. But they can also become a fulcrum that provides the dislodging of hegemonic narratives and power structures. To endorse my point of view I also presented Gloria Anzaldua's mestiza positioning which I believe Shafak and Özdamar achieve in their novels where one can trace the marginalized and silenced women of the Armenian and Turkish diaspora, the working class, minorities, and also religious mystics. I thus clarified their role as becoming border-dwellers whose literary representations depict the consciously hidden struggle of dichotomies and thickened borders regarding the Turkish feminist approach.

In reality, my perception that infers the idea of observing literature as a political and social dynamic with reference to the feminist framework has a long history in Turkey. Therefore, in the introductory chapter I focused on how the rhetoric of modernization and westernization along with the Kemalist feminist discourse emerged right after the proclamation of Republican Turkey and represents a crucial moment in Turkish literature. That is, the literary intelligentsia back then and still today are seen as advocates and

intellectual engineers in a modernized Turkish society. Accordingly, Elif Shafak in an interview with Michael Skafidas, former editor of Greek NPQ, reveals that *l'art pour l'art* has almost no meaning in contemporary Turkey as "politics and literature are inextricably linked" (2007: 29). There is a political understanding of writing in Turkey, and even fiction writers are burdened with certain responsibilities and are perceived as social engineers.

Chapter 2 provided the reader with a picture of the emergence and evolution of the "woman question" in Turkey. Therefore, this chapter appeared quite detached from any close reading of Shafak and Özdamar's novels, as the "woman question" and womean's revolution have a very complex history in Turkey. I emphasized the standard story which starts with the advent of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and the modernization and westernization project of its founding fathers. A secular nation-state was built under Kemalism, which represents the ideological basis of this revolution led by Kemal Atatürk. Nevertheless, through the chapter I presented an alternative, decolonial, feminist narrative, contrary to the widely accepted official feminist discourse that glorifies the Kemalist ideology for granting women suffragette, introducing reforms against the wearing of the veil, and the abolition of polygamy.

I have thus tried to answer the question of whether secularism represents an impasse for the Turkish "state" and the evolution of the Turkish feminist paradigm. Accordingly, besides decolonial thinkers like Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova, I also formulated my criticism on the grounds of scholars like Saba Mahmood, Talal Asad, Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, Taha Parla, Andrew Davison, and Nilüfer Göle. For scholars like Talal Asad, secularism is centrally located within the modernity paradigm abd secularism is a doctrine which resides within the modernization project and is questioned for its close connection "with the rise of a system of capitalist nation-states" that possess "unequal power and prosperity" (Asad 2003: 7). Like Asad, decolonialist thinkers have established a link between the rhetoric of modernization, secularism, and Western types of imperialism. With regard to this view Mignolo and Tlostanova argue that both secularization and modernization conceal the logic of "global coloniality" which I explored earlier (2012: 8).

In this chapter I also elaborated on the self-colonization/self-orientalism of the "White Turk" secular feminist framework to demonstrate how grand narratives constructed on a Turkish version of the imperial-colonial configuration have hampered any progressive and effective agency within the Turkish feminist framework. That is, the Turkish feminist discourse has engaged in hegemonic perceptions and subalternizing meta-narratives derived from Western paradigms.

Given my critical standpoint towards the current dominant Turkish feminist framework, it is worth noting a conversation between Turkish feminists Serpil Sancar, Yasemin Akis, and Ülkü Özakın that took place for the magazine *Cogito* in 2009. This was an interview in which Akis and Özakın ask feminist scholar Sancar questions about Turkish feminism today. While Akis and Özakın seem to perceive the Turkish feminist framework's positioning positively, Sancar emphasizes its major problems. Sancar emphasizes that the 1980 coup initiated the second wave feminist movement which should be distinguished from the feminist revolution that took place in Europe and North America.

In the conversation it is quite remarkable how especially with Sancar and the feminist interviewers share a negligence in understanding Muslim women covering themselves, "Biz mesela hâlâ, "Başörtülü kadınlar kendi yaşamlarını nasıl dönüştürmeye çalışıyorlar?" konusuna pek bakamıyoruz. Yani feministlere göre çok fazla dönüşüm algılanmıyor. Bu dönüşüm görünür değil; çünkü ana parametreler değişmiyor, değişmemiş gözüküyor. Yani başörtünün anlamı, dinin anlamı... Yani kadınlar kendi bedenleri ve yaşamları üzerindeki erkek denetimini hâlâ kabul eder görünüyorlar ve buna hâlâ açıktan karşı çıkmadıkları için, bunu açıktan ciddi bir siyasi mücadele alanı haline getirmedikleri için bunu değiştirebilmiş görünmüyorlar." (For instance, we, feminists, still cannot see how covered women transform their lives. For feminists a significant transformation cannot be perceived as the main parameters do not change. That is, the meaning of hijab, the meaning of religion… women are accepting the control of men over their bodies and lives, and as they do not appear to be battling against this on the grounds of politics they do not seem to be changing). Here Sancar tries to understand veiled women, but also insinuates a standpoint that does not problematize a feminist discourse, but rather reinforces and implies a specific understanding constructing the binary of 'us' (the secularized and emancipated feminists) vs. 'them' (the submissive Muslim women

with hijab). That is, in Turkish feminist scholarship there still exists a Western-centric and paternalistic understanding of the meaning and function of the hijab which implicitly or explicitly manifests a one-sided view on women's emancipation.

For Sancar, the impasse faced by the Turkish feminist framework in general is a result of the constant growing distance between feminist activists and feminist scholars who investigate the theoretical and methodological aspects of feminism itself. On this Özakın informs her about magazines like Amargi, Feminist Politics, and Feminist Approaches which include a wide range of discussions that seem to close the gap between feminist activism and scholarship. Nevertheless, Sancar claims that these magazines do not deal with any debate on feminist models and, what is more, that recent feminist organizations in Turkey are paralysed with essentialist ideologies. For Sancar, the mainstream feminist framework in Turkey does not question a woman's status who has earned a political, economical, or social status no matter certain critical power structures have provided her this. They merely see this as the victory of feminism and do not realize this might be re-inventing patriarchal tendencies. Moreover, she discusses the absence of any emphasis on the publication of research-based inquiries that discuss Turkish feminism on the basis of theory. She quickly adds that there are also many feminists who rack their brains on the issue but somehow either they do not commit themselves in academic writing to resolving the impasse or prefer to deal with feminist statements unrelated to Turkey. She also finds it baffling to come across Turkish feminist researchers attending international meetings whom she never sees participating in debates in Turkey.

Though feminist scholars like Sancar do not dare to openly deal with it, there is a sort of feminist framework which is not just essentialist but also burdened with a deeply Western-centric perception. By means of this conversation I have come to terms with the understanding that the Turkish feminist framework's theoretical and practical vision does not embrace various types of cultural and religious differences, especially regarding Muslim women who strive to remain attached to a feminism based on Islam and piousness rather than a Western-based feminism. In the conversation Sancar openly reveals her belief that religion as a phenomenon merely imposes on women a second-rate status and as a feminist scholar complains about the absence of powerful voices against this rhetoric. While she accuses most Turkish feminists of being essentialist, she seems to partake in the same outlook. Moreover, the conversation surprisingly continues with a discussion of

whether there exists a non-Western feminist literature with a slight nod to post-colonial feminism. She continues with her doubts about feminist movements based on Islamic perceptions and surprisingly claims that these 'might' be termed "Third World feminism" (2009). It becomes clear that Sancar, as well as Özakın and Akis, present, as Sedef Arat-Koç has claimed, a feminism that is highly distanced from any attempt to understand women and feminist groups in the Middle East. I believe they draw on a similar perspective of White-washed feminist paradigms that employ dominant notions about Muslim women being non-emancipated and forced to wear the headscarf (Ibid.).

As I have argued several times, Turkish feminist scholarship has theoretically and practically inherited an internalized orientalism towards the social, ethnic, cultural, and religious dynamics constituting Ottoman society which, ultimately, it owes to the Kemalist regime. On this, Yaprak Zihnioğlu, who is one of the rare featured feminist academics to discuss the history of the Ottoman women's movement in the 19th century, argues that even today Ottoman women's feminist challenges are not known by many (2007). Such a grand narrative is taught to most of the society from which prominent Turkish feminisms also have taken their share. Therefore, I argue that the vehicles of the Kemalist ideology (e.g. secularim, modernism, Westernization) have produced suppressive discourses which, as Arat-Koç observed earlier, "have affected the capacity of these feminisms to reach across class, ethnicity, and regional and rural/urban differences, and to represent the different voices and interests of women differently and unequally situated in Turkish society" (2007: 49). For her, these "also affect the capacity of Turkish feminists to engage in egalitarian, mutual, and inclusive transnational relationships with women's and feminist groups in the Middle East" (Ibid.). But then, as Serpil Sancar points out towards the end of the conversation I discussed a moment ago, it is no longer possible for the Turkish feminist framework to escape any encounter with ethnic and religious subjectivities which in fact will produce the necessary transition (2009).

This conclusion has looked into the underlying reasons behind the Turkish feminist deadlock in depth, a subject which might appear detached from my primary focus on Shafak and Özdamar's literary works. However, as I have indicated before, the Turkish feminist framework has a complicated genealogy and epistemology which western academic circles in particular are unfamiliar with. Moreover, Turkish feminist

understanding is also not applicable to other Third World and Middle Eastern feminist understandings as it emerged from the ruins of an imperial background and so stands on the verge of a multi-national, multi-confessional imperial history (i.e. that of the Ottoman empire) and the nationalist, laicist, republican Turkish history. After a detailed overview of the Turkish feminist framework in the dissertation, in Chapter 3 I discussed the interplay between processes of secularization, modernization, and nationalization and aesthetics which I analyzed in connection with the language choices of my writers. I began this chapter with a quote from Ai Weiwei: "Everything is art. Everything is politics". In the dissertation, art is discussed exclusively in the form of fiction writing which possesses a bilateral meaning – that is, no matter how much we preach about *l'art pour l'art*, fiction is always entangled with politics. This has brought me to the notion of decolonial aestheSis which refers to the idea that political, scholarly, and artistic beliefs such as freedom and creativity are entangled with Western aesthetics, cutting off non-Western cultures from their own history and knowledge (Mock 2011).

Within this context I perceive Shafak and Özdamar's positioning through the lense of decolonial aestheSis. Their aesthetic perceptions do not seem to belong to a mythical coloniality/modernity-based framework which rejects any perceptions and conceptions from non-European, traditional, and religious/mystic epistemologies. On the contrary, Shafak and Özdamar employ a distinctive literary stance as both novelists travel back and forth to bring back the invisible and silenced legacies of their pre-secularized, pre-nationalized, and pre-modernized communities through stories told by grandmothers and mothers.

Through my analysis I argue that both Shafak and Özdamar have come to the fore as Middle Eastern/Turkish writers in whose novels we witness a decolonial feminist task in practice. That is, the underlying, inevitable, feminist, and decolonial standpoint in their authorship which is reflected in their novels uncovers suppressed epistemologies, memories, cosmologies, and in particular a myriad of subjectivities invisible in mainstream Turkish feminist perspectives today. Thus, Chapters 4 and 5 were close readings of Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) and Özdamar's *Life is a Caravanserai* (1992) and *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (1998).

To start with Shafak's novel, Auntie Banu is a character who shines out in the narrative and obtains the role of a spiritual leader. Through the lense of decolonial thinking I argued that this dissociates Banu from a dichotomous hierarchy based on a Western cosmology which labels the spiritual and folkloric pre-modern. To clarify this on the basis of Banu's fictional role I focused on Lugones' essay "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" (2010) in which she dismantles the notion of "pre-modern" and proposes the term "non-modern" with reference to Juan Ricardo Aparicio and Mario Blaser (743). For her, modern apparatuses reduce non-Western ways of cosmological, ecological, economic, and spiritual understanding to pre-modern (Ibid.). Thus, "non-modern knowledges, relations, and values, and ecological, economic, and spiritual practices are logically constituted to be at odds with a dichotomous, hierarchical, 'categorical' logic" (Ibid.). Therefore, I interpreted Auntie Banu's non-modern ways of knowing as resisting the geo- and body-politics of knowledge from a "fractured locus" as Lugones and Mignolo put it with reference to Gloria Anzaldua's borderlands (753).

Banu plays the role of a leader resisting the dominant male Islamic milieu in the spiritual sense as a clairvoyant and as a mystic transmitting knowledge to her female anticipators. On the other hand, she disturbs the secular-liberal social imaginary in the Turkish context by being the representative of knowledge as a Sufi woman. Thus, Banu's religious and spiritual agency is not just limited to private worship, but rather turns out to be a form of non-secular sociality that implicitly deconstructs oppressive, Western, and patriarchal socio-political power structures by uncovering hidden and essentialized voices and stories of women with a myriad of differences. Banu's positioning very much corresponds with a decolonial feminist standpoint which re-establishes an alternative narrative that challenges the colonial/modern gender system which, I have argued, has penetrated the predominant feminist framework in Turkey.

A second primary character is Auntie Zeliha who possesses a non-believing, indeterminate, and resisting subjectivity. Zeliha resides in the space of in-between, that is, she apparently reveals herself as never giving into religion: "She lived as an agnostic, and she will die as one. Sincere and pure in her blasphemy. If Allah really exists somewhere, He should appreciate this heartfelt denunciation of hers, germane to only a select few, rather than being sweet-talked by the self-absorbed pleas of the religious fanatics, who are everywhere" (222). Among the Kazancı women Zeliha comes out as an

eccentric character who is not just rebellious but also a very strong woman. At a very young age she is raped by her own brother, and gets pregnant with Asya who is in fact the bastard in the novel.

In general, that *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) is mainly based on Zeliha's rape by her own brother, which she keeps secret for years, indicating why Shafak consciously writes through the female body and makes it a fundamental symbol with which we track the burdened stories of the Turkish Kazancı women and the Armenian Tchakhmakhchian women in the diaspora. By also being a fictional response to the vicious circle which the Turkish feminist paradigm is stuck in, Shafak displays a decolonial portrayal of an intervention associated with the female body, and the modern, secular, national, and patriarchal narrative. Specific female figures like Banu and Zeliha put forward a counter-memory and subjectivities of a decolonial imaginary, the former with her standpoint as the enunciator from the fractured locus and the latter through her body passed on to other bodies through art, namely tattooing that comes from a pre-modern era.

Chapter 5 discussed Özdamar's two novels in which she, like Shafak, portrays various powerful female characters. Moreover, it is clear, as Meliz Ergin writes, that the underlying politics of Özdamar's narrative is to re-visit "the question of self-colonialism experienced within Turkey vis-à-vis West in the context of the borderline cultures, where the social realities of two nations variously intersect, overlap, and diverge" (2009: 86). Özdamar's novels tacitly portray the conflicted position of women in relation to secularism, modernity, westernization, and the capitalist/patriarchal and Kemalist discourse. Her works broadly focus on the tension between Islamic and other local traditions and the Kemalist ideology that is representative of the Eurocentric world system enforced by the elites of the Turkish secular modern state. She employs traditional aesthetic forms as literary models, such as gathering folk-tales and stories, particularly from her grandmother, Arabic prayers, and idioms which she translates from Turkish to German verbatim. As Azade Seyhan notes of *Life is a Caravanserai*, "The narrative is told almost exclusively in women's voices that symbolize the conflicts of historical transitions. In their voices, songs, tales, and litanies, they reinvent cultural traditions whose modernized spirituality can absorb the shocks of modernity" (1996: 421).

This is a woman's world, an alternative space of matriarchy of Ayşe, the devout and folktale-telling grandmother, and Fatma, the mother nurturing the three siblings who is an admirer and practicer of Atatürk's reforms. Furthermore, various "auntie" figures of the neighbourhood and mad women of these communities contribute to the female voices. The female characters are distinctively powerful. On the other hand, men are portrayed either as naive or relentless as the grandfather, but the "kräftige Frauenwelt" is fundamentally predominant as the author herself indicates (quoted in Ghaussy 1999: 9). Both the grandmother in *Caravanserai* and other illiterate or rural mothers in Özdamar's book (such as the protesting mothers in *Mutter Zunge* and in *Brücke*) try to resist state power, while the narrators' own mothers often try to fit in with it. This generational alignment has a particular political connotation. The urban mother belongs to the first generation to have grown up in the Republic and to share Kemalist dreams and values such as secularism and modernization. The grandmother, on the other hand, represents traditional folk wisdom. She is not aligned with the Ottoman Empire or any state, however, but with strands of anarchic Anatolian popular culture. The daughter, as the youngest generation, time and again allies herself with the spirit of folk resistance embodied by the grandmother. (153)

In her second novel, a palimpsest-like narrative reveals the darker side, namely the colonial and imperial, of the socio-political and cultural transitions which result from the dislodging of the colonial/modern gender system. Such a challenge encompasses the dominant narratives related to migrant women and give voice to various colonial subjectivities not only within the rapidly expanding capitalist German socio-political structure, but also to a Turkey whih mimics the West and whose ambitious de-orientalization resulted in the subalternization and stigmatization of particular identities and spheres. Her traveling through the spheres of migrants in Germany and rural Anatolia's peripheries overshadowed by spatial and corporeal hierarchy transpires through her mesmerizing narrative style. Contrary to the self-orientalizing prominent "white Turk" feminist framework whose perceptions ignore the presence of certain identities, through *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* these colonial figures appear in disturbing ways.

Özdamar's frequent allusions to the construction of female sexuality and the body reveal the fact that, "Whether otherness is feared or celebrated, it is often played out in

highly gendered tropes" (Weber 2010: 38). Therefore, Özdamar constantly challenges dominant narratives which obscures female immigration on the basis of colonial/imperial difference and presents us with female workers who "significantly contribute to Germany's economy, and are active as intellectuals both within the Turkish-German community and Germany as a whole" (Ibid.). On the other hand, as Weber mentions, "Highly sexualised images have dominated representations of immigrant women in German popular media. In particular since the late 1980s, the immigrant woman has been understood often in terms of a repressed sexuality threatened by backward, nonmodern, and thus non-European 'cultures'" (39). Grand narratives have been deployed which portray immigrant women as "domestically abused woman, perpetually in danger of being punished by her male relatives for her sexual indiscretions" (Ibid.). In particular, Özdamar's narrative portrays a protagonist and her friend Rezzan who are pursueing acting careers and other women who aim to become opera singers or merely migrate for educational purposes. Unlike many migration scholars, "Özdamar inserts women into the history of guestworkers... [she] understands the left movements of the 1960s and 1970s as transnational movements, and includes intellectuals in the history of Turkish-German immigration" (43).

Crossing bridges, boundaries, lands, and traveling between the worlds of gastarbeiters in Germany and starving Kurdish peasants in south-eastern Turkey, the author constructs counter-memories and reveals socio-political traumas on the basis of female sexuality and the body, in the process erasing and overwriting official Turkish and German historiographies from a female perspective. Özdamar thus employs symbolic and literal movements to decolonize the experiences of obscured and stigmatized colonial subjectivities.

Lastly, Chapter 6 revisited the concept of decolonial aestheSis, this time adding the idea of "decolonial voice lending", a phrase conceptualized by Walter Mignolo, and applying these ideas to a close reading of Shafak and Özdamar. I argued that, besides giving voice to obscured and stigmatized female figures, through their narratives Shafak and Özdamar indicate the significance of literature, cinema, and theatre. I started with the fleshing out of the intersection between literature and (decolonial) feminist politics by describing and re-thinking Bakhtin's interpretation of the novel's power in his essay "Discourse in the Novel". I then discussed *écriture féminine* and Luce Irigaray's politics

of sexual difference to deconstruct the underlying problematics of these perspectives which relate to the close reading of the texts.

The Eurocentricism and phallogocentrism of Bakhtin's 'novelistic discourse' and 'dialogics', and *écriture féminine* violates the subjectivity of the Middle Eastern/Turkish female figure. This brings us back to Bakhtin's vision which identifies the novel as a revolutionary literary vehicle which can shift the position of power structures. Thus female authors who to some degree do not give into self-colonization, present counter-memories of the silenced and obscured female characters locked up in the universalized colonial/modern gender system certainly produce powerful alternative narratives. In this context, literary critics like Soheila Ghaussy cite texts like those of Özdamar and Shafak as texts that employ feminine writing to steal words from the patriarchally dominated language of hegemonic discourses (1999: 5). However, they forget that these Turkish writers, as John Berger discusses in his foreword to Özdamar, succesfully change voices, for instance talking about sex like a man (2007: x). Likewise, Elif Shafak problematizes such categorizations when writing as a Turkish feminist author.

In light of the literary status of Shafak's novel and its contribution to exposing the enduring pain of the Armenian minority in Turkey, we have seen how the writer's use of decolonial voice lending carefully explores the violence of the modern/colonial power matrix which has functioned through vehicles like modernism, civic nationalism and also secularism. As Rubina Peroomian discusses, there is an enormous lack of Turkish-Armenian literature which the stories of writers like Shafak, Orhan Pamuk, Mehmet Uzun and others are only now beginning to make up for (2008: 6).

In Özdamar's *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (1998) we read how the protagonist reflects her journey between acting and writing and political activism. She attempts to reconcile art and politics through decolonial voice lending and often hints at the invisible but powerful colonial/imperial difference which affects the fate of national and transnational migrant workers in Germany and Turkey. Her prime objective, to quote Shafak, is "to politicize art but also to aestheticize politics" (2003). This entanglement of aesthetic and political strategies contains various framings of the East/West problematic of the Turkish diaspora in Germany in relation to the bloody socio-political upheavals in these countries. As Kader Konuk writes, she tends to reproduce a "cultural-political

memory" without sanctifying any ideology and belief system (quoted in Göbenli 2012: 25). While turning into a socialist female activist and an artist, the nameless narrator never radically manifests a flawless leftist discourse; on the contrary, she implicitly mocks the deeply patriarchal climate that obscures activist women like her.

In pursuit of acting, the nameless narrator travels between various social milieux in Turkey and Germany such as factories and hostels and connects them to the tropes of theatre, poetry, and novel-writing. Framed as a circular itinerary, crossing physical borders initially as a Turkish woman worker who gradually turns into a socialist in Germany, thereafter an activist reporter in Eastern Turkey where Kurds endure governmental and military oppression and violence, the narrator travels back and forth between art and politics. Özdamar employs decolonial voice lending by drawing our attention to inconspicuous female migrant workers in Germany, the masses migrating to Istanbul, and Kurds facing the colonial policies of Turkey. Through her narrative we often become aware that subversive and revolutionary force is not only inherent in fictional works but also in cinema, theate, and poetry.

Bringing together poetry, theatre, and the genre of the novel, Özdamar dismantles Bakhtin's novelistic discourse and provides a counterpoint to *écriture féminine* by adopting the role of the border dweller who with decolonial voice lending transmits the counter-memory of the silenced subjectivities. The politics of her fiction, namely decolonial aestheSis, lies at the very basis of her literary consciousness which does not surrender to the identity politics that confine and pigeonhole in particular female authors from the non-Western world (Shafak 2008: 13). As Elif Shafak has argued, "The Western literary establishment wants us to tell 'characteristically Eastern stories' and leave wild imagination or avant-garde art forms to white, Western writers. Altogether we need to resist and challenge this division of labor" (Ibid.). As a result, both authors' positioning of themselves as tricksters playing with the Eurocentric and national (i.e. Turkish) dominant narratives results in an epistemic shift in terms of the normalized asymmetries of power grounded in the abstract universalism of modern aesthetics and the colonial matrix of power.

Finally, Chapter 6 dealt with the subaltern position of Turkey's imperial (i.e. Ottoman) history "in relation to capitalist modern empires and recently, the dictate of

Americanization and globalization" which "lead to additional splitness of identification in the works of transcultural authors, who cannot avoid reacting to the Western cultural expansion, which is also reflected in the way they interpret the imperial/colonial chronotope" (Ibid.).

I argue that in writing the stories of 'Others' who are confined to segregated communities, Shafak and Özdamar highlight the tranformative power of an unnamed but promising future. This literary standpoint promises an unnoticabe shift in the space of passage across indeterminate and permeable borders. In the changing political world order, where divergent subjectivities, geographies, cultures, and ideologies are increasingly interlacing, Shafak and Özdamar suggest a dynamic reading of the different collectivities within national (i.e. Turkish) and international borders. Both authors explore the plurality of languages and cultures which have historically paved the way to similar and partly divergent agglomerative lineages resulting in an inevitable diversity. By going beyond cultural, linguistic, temporal, and geographical boundaries, their narratives remind us of our responsibility to re-construct ourselves without conforming to either the purely nationalist and/or religious or purely Western, secularist, and modernist models. In fact, their literary texts manifests the development of a sensitized perception of the entanglements of the many Easts and many Wests and their potential for creating novel patterns of identity.

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